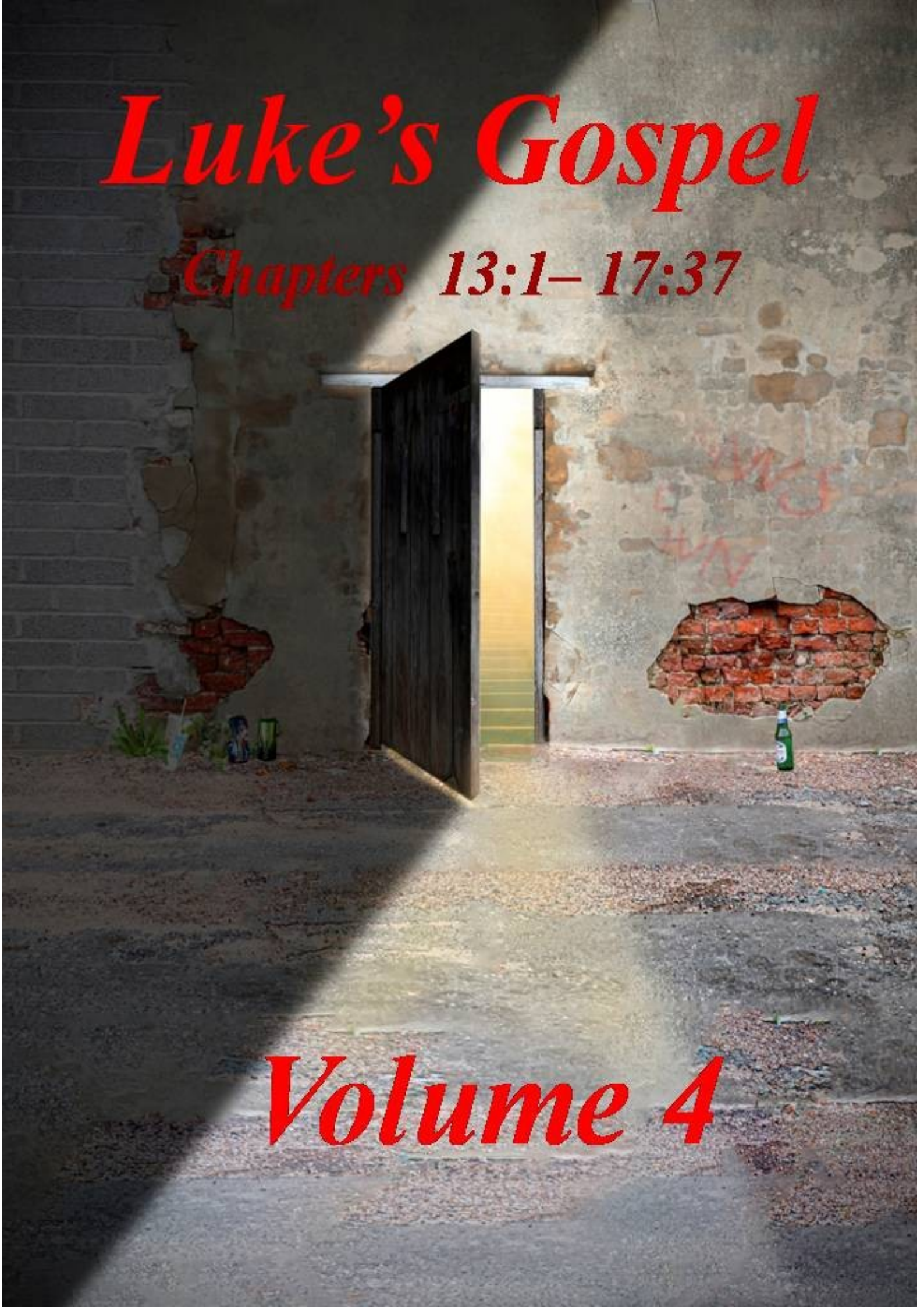


Luke's Gospel

Chapters 13:1–17:37

Volume 4



About the cover.

I am very grateful to my dear friend Christine “Chris” Eaves, who has given her time and skill to producing the covers for the 6 Volumes of Luke’s Gospel. The covers show the gradual revelation of Jesus, as you progress from a closed door, to an open door, revealing the Saviour. The covers are a sermon in their own right.

About the artist.

Chris has always been interested in photography. For many years, she sold artwork in local galleries and used photography just as a reference. Gradually though, and with the introduction of digital cameras, the photography became more important than painting.

Chris lives in Weymouth on the South Coast of the UK and works right opposite Weymouth Beach, which presents many opportunities for photography and the light is constantly changing. A few years ago she won a national photography magazine competition and the prize was a Canon 450D.

In Autumn, 2011, Chris was one of the 12 finalists (out of 55,000 entries) in the BBC TV's Countryfile Calendar Competition. “This has given me great spur to push on in this fantastic world of photography. This is a wonderful world and there is so much that I'd love to do, and yet, it seems that time here is so short. I try not to waste a moment!”

A devout Christian, Chris uses her talent to provide devotionals from nature, calendars, linking Scriptures with pictures, to inspire other Christians to look with a discerning eye on the Creator of the Universe, Jesus Christ.

Please visit Chris’s website when you have a moment.
<https://www.chriseavesphotography.co.uk/>

Dedication

This 6 Volume series comprise the ministries given between **October 2021** and **March 2024**.

To those who sat through these ministries, I thank you for your encouragement to me and I hope you too have been encouraged.

Thanks to my amanuensis Shelley for her continual encouragement to get this book published and her gracious correction, suggestions and support to me.

My gratitude goes also to my wife Diana who has encouraged my recovery and been a source of strength, inspiration and love. She has always been there for me, physically and spiritually, on my path back from a stroke.

Love in Jesus,

Mike 24th August 2024

P.S. Do contact me with any queries michael.winnett@ntlworld.com

Where a Bible version is not stated it is the Authorised Version, otherwise:

- CEV Contemporary English Version
- Darby John Nelson Darby Translation
- ERV Easy to Read Version
- Geneva 1587 Version
- GNB Good News Translation
- GW God's Word
- ISV International Standard Version
- KJV Kings James Version
- LEB Lexham English Version
- LITV Literal Translation of the Holy Bible
- LXX Septuagint
- RSV Revised Standard Version
- YLT Young's Literal Translation

Scripture quotations are in ***italic script***. All versions can be found in e-Sword. e-Sword is a fast, effective and free way to study the Bible. e-Sword is feature rich and user friendly with more capabilities than you would expect in a free Bible

study app. Blessings upon Rick Meyers for e-Sword <http://www.e-sword.net/>
Please send him a contribution if you have not already.

Contents

119. It Doesn't Matter Who You Are <i>Luke 13: 1 - 5</i>	6
120. The Fig Tree <i>Luke 13: 6 - 9</i>	10
121. Another Sabbath Healing <i>Luke 13: 10 -17</i>	15
122. The Mustard Seed and The Leaven <i>Luke 13: 18 -21</i>	20
123. Are Few Saved? <i>Luke 13: 22 - 30</i>	25
124. O Jerusalem <i>Luke 13: 31 - 32</i>	30
125. O Jerusalem <i>Luke 13: 33 - 35 cont.</i>	34
126. Another Sabbath Healing <i>Luke 14: 1 - 6</i>	39
127. The Wedding Feast <i>Luke 14: 7 - 11</i>	44
128. Feasting <i>Luke 14: 12 - 15</i>	48
129. Feasting in The Kingdom <i>Luke 14: 15 - 24</i>	53
130. The Price of Discipleship <i>Luke 14: 25 - 27</i>	58
131. The Price of Discipleship pt.2 <i>Luke 14: 28 - 35</i>	62
132. The Lost Sheep <i>Luke 15: 1 - 7</i>	67
133. The Lost Coin <i>Luke 15: 8 - 10</i>	72
134. Making the Prodigal Son <i>Luke 15: 11 - 14</i>	77
135. Coming Round <i>Luke 15: 17- 19</i>	81
136. Coming Home <i>Luke 15: 20 - 22</i>	85
137. The Ungrateful Son <i>Luke 15: 23 - 32</i>	89
138. The Parable of Mammon <i>Luke 16: 1 - 13</i>	94
139. The Pharisees and Mammon <i>Luke 16: 14 - 15</i>	98
140. The Law Does Not Fail <i>Luke 16: 16 - 18</i>	102
141. Birth Doesn't Define Death <i>Luke 16: 19 - 23</i>	106
142. They Have Got Moses <i>Luke 16: 23 - 31</i>	111
143. Trespass and Repentance <i>Luke 17: 1 - 4</i>	116
144. Increasing Faith <i>Luke 17: 5 - 6</i>	121
145. Serving Him <i>Luke 17: 7 -10</i>	125
146. Nine Corpses <i>Luke 17: 11 - 19</i>	129
147. Where is the Kingdom? <i>Luke 17: 20 - 24</i>	133
148. A Strange Birth <i>Luke 17: 20 - 24</i>	138

149. My Generation	<i>Luke 17: 22 - 25</i>	143
150. Sudden Death	<i>Luke 17: 24 - 27</i>	148
151. Destruction	<i>Luke 17: 28 - 30</i>	153
152. Where?	<i>Luke 17: 31 - 37</i>	158

119. It Doesn't Matter Who You Are *Luke 13: 1 - 5*

Luk 13:1 There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Luk 13:2 And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? Luk 13:3 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Luk 13:4 Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? Luk 13:5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

This conversation is not recorded in any other Gospel but it contains details which are important to us. Have you wondered why some of the people told Jesus this story and with these victims? I think it was to “wind up” Jesus, with a story about some Galileans who were put to death by Pilate. They knew Jesus was from Galilee and so they perhaps expected some defence of the men and some condemnation of the Romans for having sacrificed them. It was a ploy to get Jesus to say something about the Galileans and the Romans, so that they might condemn Him. Jesus however, adds to the story with a similar event at the tower of Siloam, in Jerusalem, who also perished, showing by the way that He kept up with the news.

I am sure the reply caught them out. *Luk 13:2 And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?* It wasn't that the Galileans were very bad people, worse than anyone else, criminals or those deserving a harsher punishment for a crime. It wasn't that they were less righteous than the rest of the Galileans or the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who suffered their death under the falling tower. The remarkable thing about their deaths was that it was nothing unusual.

In a world of sin, where all men are sinners, what can we expect? Sin entered the human condition at the beginning. *Rom 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:* With sin came death, like the pale rider of the apocalypse, who brought it with him, *Rev 6:8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.*

The universality of death, where it is described as reigning, is a fact of life. *Rom 5:21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.* Jesus is reminding them of this fact, *Luk 13:5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

I do not think our Lord meant that if a man repented, that he would not die in such circumstances as the Galileans or Jerusalemites. All men must die and Jesus is not offering them an incentive to have a lesser death or to escape it all together, but He is offering them a life eternal. *Heb 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: Heb 9:28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*

I think we have to take this discourse with what has gone before. *Luk 12:40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.* The subject in Luke chapter 13 follows on with the thought of the Lord's coming in chapter 12, not necessarily the second coming, as this is happening during the time of the first coming and the people He is addressing will die before the second coming, possibly at the fall of Jerusalem.

Jesus has turned an idle, provocative question back upon His questioners, and has brought them back to the "coming in an hour" that they were not prepared for. They were not ready to die, but death could come at any time and they would perish, just as the Galileans and the Jerusalemites had perished.

The swiftness of death, the suddenness with which it comes, makes it even more shocking, the fact that we have not put our preparations for death's visit in place. We have not made our last will, made peace with people, said our piece to our families and tied up all the loose ends of life, all because we were not planning to die that day. The truth is that you only have today. The past is an unchanging memory and the future has not happened, as the presumptive fool found out. *Luk 12:19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. Luk 12:20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?*

You may not have much sympathy for a wealthy fool but does this also apply to young children? Do they have different terms and conditions? I think that they are sinners, and anyone who thinks that they are entirely innocent should learn from the prophet Elisha. *2Ki 2:23 And he went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. 2Ki 2:24 And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.*

I do not see age as a barrier to sin, in fact the Bible excludes no person but Christ from having sin. The sinner does not wake up from a state of "no sin" to a state of "sin" at some random age of innocence. A child is not innocent and then they suddenly, at an arbitrary age, they become guilty. They are all guilty of sin

from the time Adam sinned, and there it is, universal, *Rom 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one*: Children should heed Christ's words as well as adults, because it speaks to all men.

But most of all the parents should exercise the duty of care for their children. *Num 33:4 For the Egyptians buried all their firstborn, which the LORD had smitten among them: upon their gods also the LORD executed judgments*. Parental disobedience brought sudden death to the Egyptian children but faithful Israel escaped. No child is innocent before God, and whether God may spare children death and how He will do this and why, are reasons not given to man. We should stop this unreasoned emotional sentimentality towards children and face up to the scripture, because they are guilty as well, and they become the next generation of adult sinners.

Death is not convenient but death is a fact of life and what comes next is the most important thing for you, so it is wise to think about it, " *I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*"

I looked at a newspaper today (3rd January 2023) and it had as its stories, British couple, 57 and 65, and pilot from Birmingham, 40, who recently became a father are named as victims of horrifying crash when two helicopters collided in mid-air on Australia's Gold Coast in front of hundreds of tourists. Martina Navratilova, 66, insists she's 'not done yet' as she thanks fans for messages over throat and breast cancer diagnosis after Billie Jean King led support for the 'brave' Wimbledon legend. Marvel star Jeremy Renner will need a second operation and is in intensive care with 'blunt chest trauma and orthopaedic injuries' - after he ran over his own leg with snow plough at his Lake Tahoe ranch. Damar Hamlin an NFL star, 24, 'has a pulse but is not breathing on his own' after collapsing following massive tackle: Watching Buffalo Bills and Cincinnati Bengals players weep as he receives CPR on the field before going to hospital in a critical condition. Man, 32, killed in New Years eve horror smash had been released from jail only last year after serving 14-year stretch for the brutal murder of a disabled man. 'We're lucky to be alive': Guests tell of 'running under burning embers' during terrifying escape from blazing hotel where three people and a dog died, terrified guests say they were 'running under burning embers' as they escaped a fire at the three-star New County Hotel, County Place, Perth, shortly before 5.10am today. Russia admits 63 of its soldiers were killed by Ukrainian HIMARS attack on barracks and more than 100 were wounded in one of the Kremlin's biggest single losses of life in the war.

Life, contrary to the movies, which show people getting knocked around and surviving, is very uncertain and very fragile. Even Christians are not absolved

from sudden death. I read of a pastor's wife who collapsed over the Christmas holidays with a heart attack and died. Nobody has a lease on tomorrow, nobody has the assurance of good health, no one can see the dark clouds of tragedy engulfing their lives tomorrow. But tomorrow is absolute uncertainty for man, except the prospect of death.

The Native Americans had seen something of this. Describing it as the ending of a Lakota Sioux prayer, the war cry, "today is a good day to die" and is presumed to refer to patriotic sentiment, that is, warriors should always be willing to die while proudly defending their families and home territory. Indeed, such was probably at the heart of the phrase when skirmishing the cavalry.

An unsolicited interpretation offered by an Ottawa woman, however, carried a different meaning. "We Indians have an expression '**today is a good day to die**'. It means that we should be ready to die on any given day. We should always be prepared to die, and have no regrets. That's why it's important to begin each day afresh, and not let past problems or present distractions cloud how God wants us to live".

This world offers no permanence and to try to endow it with permanence is utterly futile. It may be a wonderful Creation, beautiful apart from man's sin, but it is none the less going to perish. *Heb 1:10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: Heb 1:11 They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; Heb 1:12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.*

God has decreed that the uncertainty of a life without Himself is futile, and the result is a disaster waiting to happen to us. The reason is that we live in God's world, without God. We are trespassers in His kingdom on earth, we pay Him no dues, no respect, only blasphemy against His name. And yet, when things in life do not go as planned, we change our song, to the song of the hypocrite, and we cry, "O my God, why did you do this to me why do you not save me?" We acknowledge the existence of God when we are in desperation, but never in times of peace. He is a convenience to serve us.

The snivelling wretches always turn to God in trouble yet they never even think about Him when things go well. *Rom 1:21 **Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God,** neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Rom 1:22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, Rom 1:23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.* If God is silent to your prayer of desperation, then you should consider how you serve Him.

It is exactly the world we deserve to live in and we have made it so that it seems to fit our convenience but God has made it for Himself. *Pro 16:4 The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. Pro 16:5 Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.* Jesus is warning us of the judgement to come so that we are without excuse. *Luk 13:5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

Do you wonder why God has so little contact with us today, why He does not speak openly with the religious leaders and maintains a dignified silence? Why God doesn't speak face to face, to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Pope, the Moderator of the churches, the Metropolitans, the Archbishops, the Patriarchs and so on, the Religious leaders that think that they are doing God's work, they think they have God's ear but have no real contact with Him. All of them going the way that they hope is right and none of them are agreeing, because if they did, we would only have one Church, and that would be Christ's. They kid you they hear God's voice but why is He telling them different things.

I think that the reason is this. That God has given His Word and you and I can take it or leave it. He has gone from this world to His Kingdom and will come again, to find the remnant of the faithful, but until then we are led by His Spirit, the Comforter, and that generally is an inner voice. But for some the "voice" can be mistaken for our own voice, or the voice of the devil, and not God. What matters is that we are faithful to the revealed will of God for us. Whatever happens to us in life, whatever we are told, whatever we think, it must be that seen through the lens of God's Word. All of the devices of man, all the knowledge of man, is partial, flawed and misleading. The natural man is a false prophet and will do, consciously or unconsciously, all things against his Creator.

Jesus spoke a parable which shows us what is happening in the "church". *Mar 12:1 And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. Mar 12:2 And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. Mar 12:3 And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. Mar 12:4 And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. Mar 12:5 And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some. Mar 12:6 Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. Mar 12:7 But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. Mar 12:8 And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. Mar 12:9 What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.*

Men will come and make something else of the Masters work and they will deliberately make it their own vineyard, and remove the people who come to receive for the master, "*many others; beating some, and killing some*". We do not have the faith of Christ, because we are deceived and we have made an artificial world where there is a false set of values. We live in a false world where we hope that as the wicked get punished by sudden and violent deaths, the good get long lives. This is untrue. Because all men are wicked and because Christ came to seek and save the lost, He gives us fair warning. Repent or perish. Christ came to save SINNERS, not people who go to church, not good people, not people who do good deed, Sinners.

Luk 13:5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

120. The Fig Tree *Luke 13: 6 - 9*

Luk 13:6 He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Luk 13:7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? Luk 13:8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: Luk 13:9 And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

The fig tree was a common sight in Israel, and many were planted in the vineyards. It was a sign of stability and comfort. *1Ki 4:24 For he (Solomon) had dominion over all the region on this side the river, from Tiphshah even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side the river: and he had peace on all sides round about him. 1Ki 4:25 And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man **under his vine and under his fig tree**, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.* Like the grape vine, the fig tree was a sign of prosperity in Israel.

The fig tree provided some welcome shade but the fruit was why it was kept. It might take three to five years to fruit, so living in stable times was conducive to their growth. The Jews knew a lot about fig trees and how to get the best from this plant. This parable would resonate with them and they knew full well that they could not afford to have a tree that was fruitless and occupied good growing land.

But this story is a parable and has two meanings, one earthly and one spiritual. The earthly story is self evident to the hearers, the spiritual side of the story is less self evident. From antiquity figs and fig leaves have figured in Bible History.

They provided the coverings for man in the garden. *Gen 3:7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.* This came from the “Abide in Christ” website,

Adam and Eve hid themselves thinking they could hide themselves from God. The effect of sin made them aware that they had disobeyed God and they were ashamed. Before they sinned they were delighted to see God, but after they sinned they did not want anything to do with Him. Sin causes us to want to hide from God physically, emotionally and spiritually because we know we are guilty.

Like Adam we try a lot of “fig leaves” to cover up our shame and guilty conscience (v. 7). A friend of mine said, “The oldest profession is not what people think; it is the clothing industry.” We are constantly trying to cover up.

The psychological exposure caused by our sins is intolerable, and we try innumerable ways to cover it up. The end result of these modern “fig leaves” in our pagan world culture is even greater exposure and guilt. Drugs, alcohol, promiscuity, lust of the eyes, the world, the flesh, etc. do not relieve the stress of guilt; they only increase it. Evasion and excuses increase our guilt before God.

Man has never been able to make a “fig leaf” that will cover his sin. We try “fig leaves” of good religious works, church membership, baptism, confirmation, tithing, the sacraments, religious philosophy, new age movements, philanthropy, etc. But we still cannot escape our guilt.

Traditionally, in Judaism, the so called forbidden fruit is described as a fig. Even in Michelangelo’s famous painting of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, we find that the fig tree won the day when it came to depicting the tree of the forbidden fruit. The depiction of this fruit as a fig is fairly natural from the description of what immediately follows the eating of the fruit, *Gen 3:7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.*



This is not so farfetched. The tree that the couple had eaten from was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, a fruit meant to make people “wise”, a fruit to know good and evil. *Gen 3:5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. Gen 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.*

The “Knowledge”, good and evil, was a knowledge of righteousness and sin. *Rom 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for **I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*** Adam had possibly reasoned that if the fruit had given him the “knowledge”, the leaves of the tree might do something to ward off the debilitating power of the fruit. That idea is not so implausible. *Rev 22:2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

Fig leaves are used for diabetes, high cholesterol, and skin conditions such as eczema, psoriasis, and vitiligo. Some people apply the milky sap (latex) from the tree directly to the skin to treat skin tumours and warts. It was a very useful tree, so for the Lord to destroy it for a lack of fruit seems a bit harsh.

But the tree was like Israel. Israel had an independent vision of righteousness and sin, a view of righteousness and sin apart from God, without reference to God. There was the God of righteousness and sin, on the one hand and there was the “stand alone” righteousness and sin, on the other hand. Like today, men try and make a system of good and evil without reference to the Almighty God and it fails miserably.

God or a tree, which would we be persuaded of? We could go to God for the Knowledge of Good and Evil, or we could go to a tree for the Knowledge of Good and Evil and so we could bypass God. We know the outcome, they went to the tree instead of God. It was in a sense the knowledge of righteousness and sin without the presence of God. It was extreme Pharisaism, it was self-righteousness and their own definition of sin. It was Religion without God. It was the Pharisaism of Saul until he met Christ on the Damascus road. *Php 3:9 And be found in him, **not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but***

that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

Israel is the tree that Christ speaks of and Israel is likened to a fig tree. *Hos 9:10 I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; **I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first time:** but they went to Baalpeor, and separated themselves unto that shame; and their abominations were according as they loved.* In Jeremiah chapter 24, we see that the nation of Israel is like two baskets of figs. *Jer 24:1 The LORD shewed me, and, behold, two baskets of figs were set before the temple of the LORD, after that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the carpenters and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon. Jer 24:2 One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe: and the other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad.*

The “naughty” figs as they are charmingly called in the King James Version, are rotten figs. We also learn that the captivity is for the good of the nation so that some might be saved. *Jer 24:5 Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans **for their good.** Jer 24:6 For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and **I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down;** and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. Jer 24:7 And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: **for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.***

The rotten figs, or evil figs are destroyed. *Jer 24:8 And as the evil figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so evil; surely thus saith the LORD, So will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in this land, and them that dwell in the land of Egypt: Jer 24:9 **And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them.** Jer 24:10 And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and to their fathers.*

It is rather like the final Judgement, *Mat 13:30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.* The remnant is taken out of Israel before it is judged.

The two baskets of figs, one bad and one good, is the whole nation of Israel in its constituent parts, the apostate nation which will be judged and the remnant of the nation which shall be saved. Paul makes this distinction between the split

nation, the two halves of Israel, the elect nation and the natural fleshly nation, the remnant of the faithful and the godless nation. *Rom 9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For **they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:** Rom 9:7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. Rom 9:8 That is, **They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God:** but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.....Rom 9:27 Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, **a remnant shall be saved:***

Let me recapitulate on what I have been saying. The fig tree that Jesus was talking about, the fig tree that a “certain” man had planted in his vineyard, was Israel. That Nation of Israel had from its birth in the Garden of Eden, chosen to live by the power of the law rather than by the Power of God. It covered its reproductive organs with fig leaves, self righteousness which God discarded in favour of the skins of animals, foreshadowing the death and righteousness of Christ. *Gen 3:21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.*

As the nation separated itself from the rest of mankind it became divided in two, from the believing heart of a godly remnant and the evil heart of the fleshly Israel. The nation became the two baskets of figs, one good and one evil.

Jesus is giving a last call to a godly remnant. He is telling the people by this parable that if they do not become good “figs”, good fruitful citizens, if they do not produce good fruit, they will be cut down. It is the last year that He will tolerate it, *Luk 13:8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, **let it alone this year also**, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: Luk 13:9 And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.*

There were thousands of Jews who rejected this message, in past ages and in the times up to Christ. But there was a remnant who believed the Lord and would in all generations up to this time believe in Him, *Jer 23:5 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. Jer 23:6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.*

Now, in the New Testament times this godly remnant is composed of Jews and Gentiles, formed into one body called Christians. No, not those who adopt that religion of Christianity because their fathers adopted it, but a remnant of the people who call themselves Christian.

To those people who would have all of the Jews in the kingdom, I have this to ask,” Which Jews?” Taking Jeremiahs vision of the two baskets of figs before the

Lord in the temple, which one do you think that God will keep? All of them, the two baskets, the evil one's, or the good figs? You are a fool who thinks it is every single Jew. You are an even bigger fool if you think that He is going to keep the bad figs. It is the remnant that He keeps, the good figs.

On the Day of Judgement, when those Jews of the first covenant are raised from the dead, to appear before Christ, do you think, in your wildest dreams, that God will suspend His law and forgive the people who all their lives despised Him? Do you think that God will suspend His law to be gracious to the people who killed His Son? Hear this, *Mat 21:38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. Mat 21:39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. Mat 21:40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?* The Jews will be split into sheep and goats and only a remnant of the Jews shall be saved.

Coming on in time to the New Testament, when the Jews and Gentiles are together, then called "Christians", what is going to happen to those who are "Christian" in name only? What happens to the nominal believer who shows by their life that they are opposed to Jesus? I think that it will be the same as in the Old Testament, a remnant will be saved, *Rev 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the **remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*** There was a remnant in the Old Testament and there is a remnant in the New Testament who "**have the testimony of Jesus Christ**".

With this in mind we have to interpret the rest of the New Testament by holding this truth. Israel and the remnant must be fixed by the statements given above. The Jews and Gentiles of the New Testament, called Christians, and the older testament Jews are saved by the same name, by the same person, in the same way, *Act 4:10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. Act 4:11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Act 4:12 Neither **is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.***

Does God suspend the laws for which He died, to the Jews who hate Him? No, they will be judged according to law. If they did not repent in Jesus day and they do not repent in our day, they will be held guilty of their sins. If they do not bear fruit, as Jesus says, they shall be cut down.

121. Another Sabbath Healing *Luke 13: 10 -17*

Luk 13:10 And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. Luk 13:11 And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. Luk 13:12 And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. Luk 13:13 And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. Luk 13:14 And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. Luk 13:15 The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? Luk 13:16 And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day? Luk 13:17 And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

You may be wondering why Jesus talks to the Pharisees and religious rulers as well as the Disciples. The Pharisees and religious rulers had got so many bad ideas about Judaism that we might consider them beyond the pale, hardly worth talking to. But Jesus did keep talking to them, so why, and what was the difference the “Disciples” and the “Pharisees”?

The disciples were Jews, just like the Pharisees and religious rulers, but they had not developed the teaching beyond what was given in the law. Jesus came along and with irresistible grace called them to follow Him. Religion would no longer be a matter for dispute but of solid foundations for the budding members of His Kingdom. He would give the true meaning of the scriptures.

The Pharisees were supposedly more studied than the disciples, more mature in their thinking, more advanced in the Law of Moses. They had seen ways to supposedly answer the questions that arise from certain obscurities of the law. Things like, “what were you allowed to do on the Sabbath?” Of course, they knew that you should do no work, nor your animals, but was it “work” to heal someone? They had reasoned it was work to heal. They had developed a type of thinking that was not consistent and they had pushed the boat out into dark waters where they were losing sight of Judaism.

They had developed a “replacement theory” of their religion, replacing what God had said with a new teaching, a new understanding. The old teaching was not as good as the new man made teaching, not as accurate, not with as much detail as their pharisaic teaching. It happens that science in its blind quest for knowledge does much the same, as Richard Feynman described for Physics. He said,

‘correct theories of physics are perfect things, and a replacement theory must be a new perfect thing, not an imperfection added onto an old perfect thing. This is the essence of “revolution”, the replacement of the old with a new, not the adding of more crap onto the old.’

It seems to me a perfect description of Pharisaism.

In science, men have invented things to prop up their anti-God view of the Cosmos. Dark matter is a hypothetical form of matter thought to account for approximately 85% of the matter in the universe. Dark matter is called "dark" because it does not appear to interact with the electromagnetic field, which means it does not absorb, reflect, or emit electromagnetic radiation and is, therefore, difficult to detect. *Difficult!* It has never been seen. Physicists have yet to produce any empirical evidence for either string theory, which was invented more than 40 years ago, loop-space theory or any other unified theory. They don't even have good ideas for obtaining the evidence of it. The idea of a big bang and everything coming from “nothing” is a violation of the law of Conservation of energy. It is as Feynman so colourfully described it, “crap”, yet men invent things to satisfy themselves not the truth.

Pharisees and religious leaders explored the Law but based their exploration on philosophy not on fact. But because the Pharisees were in error, there was no reason to push them aside, and Jesus did not, *Mat 23:2 Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: Mat 23:3 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.* They did, after all, have a lot of truth inside them. They just needed correcting and some of them, like the Pharisee Nicodemus were corrected. They also provided Jesus with the perfect counterpoint to His teaching of the disciples.

Our story begins on another Sabbath day, while Jesus was teaching in a synagogue. It must have been wonderful to hear Him teach, and I imagine the subject was the Law and its relevance to their lives. I would think that He was preaching from, *Exo 23:12 Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed.* Not however, content with preaching the word of God, Jesus does something practical. *Luk 13:11 and a woman was there who had been crippled by an evil spirit for eighteen years. She was completely bent over and could not straighten up. Luk 13:12 When Jesus saw the woman, he called her over and said, "You are now well." Luk 13:13 He placed his hands on her, and right away she stood up straight and praised God.* CEV.

There was another woman Jesus healed who had an issue of blood twelve years. *Luk 8:43 And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent*

all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, Luk 8:44 Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd. This woman had suffered longer, eighteen years, with a spirit of infirmity, a malign spirit from the evil one that caused her to be bent over. From the time the young boy Jesus went to the temple aged 12 years, until now when He was 30 years old, this poor woman had been suffering. Yet she still goes to the synagogue perhaps because she knew Jesus was there.

What is the significance of 18 years? What is the significance of the 18 persons killed when the tower of Siloam fell upon them? Why 18? According to one commentator it signifies "oppression", the main verses being, *Jdg 3:14 So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of **Moab eighteen years**.....Jdg 10:7 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon. Jdg 10:8 And that year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel: **eighteen years**, all the children of Israel that were on the other side Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead.* The woman certainly knew oppression.

Eighteen is composed of 6+6+6, the trinity of man. But both those ideas are so tenuous that we are going into non-biblical realms for our understanding. By doing this, by speculating and inventing, we may miss the great point of the Sabbath day healing.

We go back to a Sabbath in Nazareth when Jesus stood up and read, *Luk 4:17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, Luk 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, Luk 4:19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*

That was not just a "spiritual" promise, so that for example, the spiritually blind would see the Messiah's glory. It happened physically as well. But I am not saying that it goes on in all ages, physically, but while Jesus was here in the world, it certainly did. He made the saying true in the physical, that He might show what man could not see, the spiritual dimension.

Jesus does other healing miracles on the Sabbath day, *Luk 6:9 Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? Luk 6:10 And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other. Luk 6:11 And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.*

And, *Luk 14:2 And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy. Luk 14:3 And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? Luk 14:4 And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go; Luk 14:5 And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day? Luk 14:6 And they could not answer him again to these things.*

What is the Lord of the Sabbath doing? Did you see that He laid His hands on the woman? This is a direct physical association with the woman and by taking her infirmities upon Himself He actively fulfils His word, "*to set at liberty them that are bruised*". She was straightway made well, and stood upright for the first time in 18 years. She was no longer bowed over with that unseen burden and she glorified God.

She was, like many in Israel whom the Pharisees had burdened, bowed double under their law. *Mat 23:4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.* Jesus had freed her from her infirmity or weakness, and she is typical of the nation of Israel that is bowed down under that oppressive teaching. At last the Messiah is come.

The ruler of the synagogue didn't like it. Neither do religious men like it today, when their little inventions and imaginations are cut down to the root. "This is the way it must be done", they say, and when Jesus comes and bursts their soap bubble which they made to make man clean, they complain bitterly. They show themselves to be hypocrites, actors treading the boards, which they have no right to tread.

The issue was that Jesus could have healed the woman on another day. The healing was not the issue in the dispute. The timing of the healing was the issue, and it was all about timing, "*There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day*". The Sabbath, according to the ruler, was sacred, and the healing by Jesus, was just like "gathering sticks of firewood", a work of man. But the ruler of the synagogue did not have the courage of his convictions and demand that Jesus was stoned, he just bleats his well rehearsed mantra, "*There are six days in which men ought to work*".

I had not considered this before, but it seems to me that the ministry has ramped up a bit. We are not looking at Jesus the man, but Jesus as Lord God of the Universe.

Jesus then answers the Ruler in the person of "The Lord", *Luk 13:15 The **Lord then answered him**, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the*

sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? This is God speaking to him, the Lord of the Sabbath, the Lord who gave men this Law, and the Lord who interprets this Law. We have not really concentrated on this aspect of Jesus' ministry. We have seen the humanity and that He was like us, in fact, we would say He was a normal person, except when He did miracles. Then, He seemed like a superman with extraordinary powers, and I am sure the disciples saw Him like this for a time. But He was much more than a superman, He was God incarnate.

If Luke did not mean "The Lord", Jesus Himself, was God, he would have used a different phrase so as not to confuse his readers. As John says they are inseparable. *Joh 10:30 I **and my Father are one***. This is the person standing in the midst of the Synagogue, The Lord, and He corrects the legalistic ruler of the Synagogue, whom He calls a hypocrite.

Does the man know who he is arguing with? He is arguing with God Himself, who shall have him in a similar position on the Judgement Day, unless he repents. We all think we are right in what we say and do. We do not think for a moment, Who we pretend to represent, while disobeying Him, He who etched the tablets of stone with His finger.

Arguing against God Almighty has become normal for some who call themselves Christians and they introduce new rules to their hearers, which Jesus did not sanction. *1Co 6:9 Don't you know that evil people won't have a share in the blessings of God's kingdom? Don't fool yourselves! No one who is immoral or worships idols or is unfaithful in marriage or is a pervert or behaves like a homosexual 1Co 6:10 will share in God's kingdom. Neither will any thief or greedy person or drunkard or anyone who curses and cheats others.*

The ruler of the Synagogue thought more of the farmyard animals than he did of human beings. He thought this because he thought that the laws he had invented, were greater than God's laws. He did not even see the inconsistency and double standards that he was applying to the Law. But then, he saw the Law as being separate from the things the Law protected. He saw the law as an unfeeling machine without understanding, which had to be obeyed at all cost, even when he was in ignorance of its purpose.

The law contained the element of Mercy, which we seldom think of, *Mat 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, **mercy**, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Mat 23:24 Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.*

The ruler of the Synagogue showed he loved the Law, he executed a form of judgement, he believed in God, so he had faith, but one thing he lacked **Mercy**. It was the vital ingredient which he lacked and it made him into a hypocrite as it does us also, *Luk 13:17 And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.* I wonder whether the ruler had an epiphany. He had never been so close to God as this and perhaps this event, just tipped him into the Kingdom of God or perhaps, it tipped him into hell.

122. The Mustard Seed and The Leaven *Luke 13: 18-21*

*Luk 13:18 Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? Luk 13:19 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. Luk 13:20 And again he said, **Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God?** Luk 13:21 It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*

In the other record which appears to be the same account, *Mat 13:31 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, **The kingdom of heaven is like** to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Mat 13:33 Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*

Why should the Lord suddenly switch subject and launch into a consideration of the kingdom? What went before is a clue, the story of “the woman with the disabling spirit” goes with this parable of the “mustard seed and the leaven”. The stories are connected by the words, *Luk 13:18 Then said he....* Jesus has been teaching in the Synagogue on the Sabbath and having rebuked the hypocritical ruler for thinking more about farm animals than the daughter of Abraham, He gets the applause of the crowd. *Luk 13:17 And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: **and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.***

Jesus tells the happy crowd what the kingdom of God is like, just in case they had any misconceptions. John had preached that the kingdom was imminent. *Mar 1:14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, Mar 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and **the kingdom of God is at hand:** repent ye, and believe the gospel.*

They may have got the wrong message. *Luk 19:11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.* So this is corrective of that thought. In case they thought that the kingdom was visibly coming on this earth, after all Jesus is ministering and showing signs and wonders to the people, He speaks of the hidden nature of the kingdom.

I think that we can divide religion into the externals and internals of behaviour. Jesus has been talking about this and it comes out in His sermon on priorities. *Luk 12:31 But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.* The Pharisees concentrated on the outward and not on the inward washing. *Luk 11:39 And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.* It was necessary to show the people that it was all very well to do outward things but what mattered were the inward and unseen things, the state of the heart. In a like manner, the kingdom of God was not only about externals but also about the hidden thing of the heart. So just what is the kingdom?

The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven are the same places, one phrase given presumably for the understanding of the Jews and one which the Gentiles would understand. Jesus gives us a better understanding of this Kingdom as it grows and He is the one to do it, after all, He travelled both ways. *Joh 3:12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? Joh 3:13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, **but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.***

I must stop to look at these profound thoughts before continuing. It says plainly, "No one has gone up but He that came down, even He who is at once both up and down." It says that during His stay on Earth, He was in Heaven at the same time, two events which occur in different places simultaneously. He is the only one to accomplish both, going up to heaven and coming down, and no one has done the journey both ways, but Him.

This says some very, seeming contradictory things about the Kingdom. How can you be in two places at once? The New Testament tells us we too have come to mount Zion, we are in Heaven, we do not "go to heaven", we are there, *Heb 12:22 **But ye are come unto mount Sion,** and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, Heb 12:23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.* So like Jesus, we have access to heaven while having our feet firmly on earth.

The seemingly mysterious nature of how it comes about is answered by Jesus, *Luk 17:20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh **not with observation**: Luk 17:21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, **the kingdom of God is within you***. The kingdom did not come with any visual cues, not by observation, not by sight. God's kingdom isn't something you can see. The kingdom is within you.

So if the kingdom is within you, what does that mean? It is in its entirety, the Kingship of Jesus over us in time and space. Where Jesus is we are, where the Father is the Son is, and we live separately from the world. This kingdom is about the hidden things of life, the internals of life.

Do we see the kingdom as a whole, growing up into a vast empire or is Jesus talking about how the kingdom grows **within us** as individuals? Is the Kingdom something that grows separately from us, as an entity, a community, merely defined by the number of individuals entering it? Does it grow in numerical size by the addition of believers only? Or is it something which grows with us, personally, qualitatively, by the fact that we are increasing in the virtues of Christ. We must grow in Christ or where is the life in us? *2Pe 3:18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*

However, if we are just passengers in this process, watching the kingdom from afar, not contributing to the process of its growth, then what is the place of the kingdom in our lives? It becomes, as most people see it, as a place that we go to after we die, as a place of rest, somewhere that was isolated from us, until the time we were allowed into it by death.

There is a parallel scripture which speaks of a tree, which “*grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it*”. It was an individual, the king of Egypt, *Eze 31:2 Son of man, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to his multitude; Whom art thou like in thy greatness?Eze 31:6 All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations.....Eze 31:18 To whom art thou thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? yet shalt thou be brought down with the trees of Eden unto the nether parts of the earth: thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised with them that be slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord GOD.*

The king of Egypt is both an individual and the nation he leads. He is as much responsible for the growth of the “tree” as the people of Egypt. The same is true of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. We are in one of the two kingdoms and our lives are building the kingdoms. It is much easier to go to hell

as it has wide gates and we are already hell bound unless Jesus delivers us. There is no neutrality and we are in satan's camp unless we have been delivered, *Col 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: Col 1:14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:*

The fact is that we are not mere observers, we are participants in the growth of the kingdoms. As such we contribute to what those kingdoms stand for, whether for God or satan, whether for truth in Christ or the lies of the devil. What we do here on earth will define us in eternity.

Now I have said before that salvation is an ongoing process, *Mat 24:13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved..... 1Pe 1:9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.* Salvation is not yet complete, so why do I say that you are in heaven, "you are come to mount Sion"? Is being in the kingdom compatible with not being saved? Was being in the kingdom of Israel compatible with being saved? No, it was not, *Rom 9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For **they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:*** You could be in the nation of Israel but not be one of God's people, and therefore not be saved.

The reformed view seems to think,

If you are in Christ, you are a new creation, that is, you are definitively sanctified, and are seated with Christ in heaven. The fruit of good works is a necessary consequence of that new creation life (i.e. It exists), not a bar to meet to attain it, or a co-instrument along with faith that God will weigh at the final judgement. For the Christian, the final judgement is vindication that you are in Christ, the revealing of sons. The already pronounced verdict for Christians who are in Christ is not only not-guilty, but righteous first-born sons of God who have eternal life and an eternal inheritance. Christian, that is good news for sinners like me and you.

Of course we put ourselves in this position, as saved people, but that is us making the decision that we are Christ's. We have said that we have all the requisites for heaven, but that is made on relatively little information, and we must tread carefully and humbly because we can fall, *1Co 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. 1Co 10:12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*

All the glowing words of the "reformed" message can be set tumbling down by the failure as a result of our flesh, *1Co 10:7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up*

to play. 1Co 10:8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. 1Co 10:9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

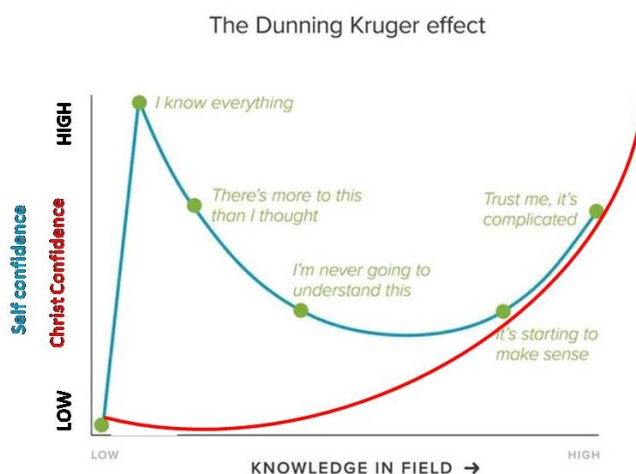
It seems to me that this, the theory of salvation with all its confidence, is put from a heavenly perspective. But from an earthly perspective, where we are, should we have the same confidence? That confidence comes with a continual acknowledgement of sin. *1Jn 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 1Jn 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

That confidence in eternal life, that confidence that we are saved, that confidence that we are going to heaven, does not come from ourselves. As we start in the faith it does but as we go on we see that it is all through Christ and we have to rely on Him alone.

It's like the Dunning Kruger effect which may be expressed as,

The Dunning-Kruger effect occurs when a person's lack of knowledge and skills in a certain area cause them to overestimate their own competence. By contrast, this effect also causes those who excel in a given area to think the task is simple for everyone, and underestimate their relative abilities as well.

I have modified it to show a Christian view of the diagram. When we start out on our journey of faith, at the point we say I am "saved", we launch ourselves on an adventure. We grow in confidence, like a rocket going into space (**blue line**), we know it all, we are supremely confident, we have all the answers or so we think. Then we begin to see, as we get more knowledge, "that there is much more to Christianity" than we thought. We continue on our journey with less confidence and we go on a downward slope of confidence, while we increase in knowledge. I have drawn my Christian point of departure from Dunning Kruger (**red line**). We increase in knowledge but we continue to lose our self confidence.



Theodore Monod expressed it like this,

Higher than the highest heavens,
Deeper than the deepest sea,
Lord, Thy love at last hath conquered;

Grant me now my heart's petition,
None of self, and all of Thee
None of self, and all of Thee.

It is the coming to terms with the fact that there is nothing good in us. *Rom 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.* It is in Him, Jesus, that we find all that we desire. *Rom 8:11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* We are all of us at different points of growth, and we will all change, but Christ remains the same.

Whatever the how's and the why's of entering salvation and the kingdom of God, Jesus does not tell us. What He does tell us is how it grows within us and how it works silently until it has become a great tree. It grows to maturity and the whole of it is leavened. It is complete and whole. If we continue to follow Jesus, we shall get there and be saved. *Heb 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Heb 12:2 **Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;** who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

123. Are Few Saved? *Luke 13: 22 - 30*

Luk 13:22 And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Luk 13:23 Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Luk 13:24 Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. Luk 13:25 When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Luk 13:26 Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. Luk 13:27 But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. Luk 13:28 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. Luk 13:29 And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. Luk 13:30 And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

Are there few that are saved? Why should you want to know? Well, if its a large number saved we might feel that we also have a hope, and so by looking around at everybody else, we can assess our chances. We are usually over optimistic when comparing ourselves to other people, like when we assess our driving and generally we are among the 90 per cent who say that they are better than average. We would say that we were in with a good chance of being saved, if there is a large number saved.

If it's a small number we still might think we could get a place, after all, there are millions of lottery tickets sold each week but only one winner, and it could be me, at 14,000,000 to 1. Another case of over optimism, which it seems the lottery buying public are prone to, and so they continue to buy tickets, throw their money away, and loose. But a small chance is better than no chance.

Strange that the man does not ask the question, "What must I do to be saved?" He doesn't seem too bothered about his own salvation, he is only concerned by the number of people saved. As a Jew, he probably thinks that he is in that number of saved people already, in virtue of his covenant relationship with God, *Joh 8:41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; **we have one Father, even God.** Joh 8:42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.*

Interestingly, although the man asked the question, he does not get the answer, but the people, the crowd accompanying him get an answer. There are other passages which bear on this subject which will make it clearer. *Mat 7:13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Mat 7:14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find itMat 19:23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. Mat 19:24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. Mat 19:25 When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?Mat 22:14 For many are called, but few are chosen.*

Jesus says entry is by a "strait" gate or "narrow" gate, from the Greek stenós = στενός, used in the word stenography, meaning "narrow writing" or as it has come to be known, short hand. But enter in to what? Enter in to salvation, for that is the question. *Luk 13:23 Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be **saved**? And he said unto them, Luk 13:24 Strive **to enter in at the strait gate**: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

Strive, agonize about getting in, but who should strive? You of course! Jesus is not speaking hypothetically, He is addressing the crowds in front of Him, and by

extension, us too, if we are reading the Gospel to find out what we must do. If we are just reading it for the sake of reading it, then we are no better than the man who asked the question, “*are there few that be saved?*”, and he does not get an answer.

If salvation is a gift, and we have got it, why do we have to strive, literally to agonize, to enter in at the narrow gate? Surely if it is done for you by Christ, there is nothing to do, it is just passively obtained? We do not however, get wafted in to salvation, we have to agonize over it, and that is far different than what the modern evangelists teach. In American evangelical Christianity, achieving salvation is called “getting saved,” often referred to as being “born again” through a spiritual awakening, likened to a second birth. Being saved spiritually speaking, means your sins no longer count against you, toward an eternal death sentence. Instead, they are forgiven by the grace of God, and you are given the free gift of eternal life. Being saved does not spare you from earthly troubles, but it does spare you from eternal judgment.

“Come to Jesus!”, “Come now!”, “Come to the front, Jesus is waiting here for you.”, “Get up and come quickly!”, “He died for you. The least you can do is take a few steps towards Him.” This style of evangelistic plea has become the focal point of almost every major evangelistic outreach of our day, and the common end of most Sunday worship services. But, are such altar calls and invitations Biblically warranted? Is it the language of Jesus or later His Apostles? No it is not.

You would think that Jesus is so ready to give salvation away, that He scatters it liberally with no obligation on our part. Salvation is viewed as a commodity, a thing which is an object, a golden ticket, to have and to hold, to be exchanged for eternal life. It doesn’t matter how you behave, as long as you have that golden ticket you are safe, you can sin at leisure, but because you have the ticket you are saved. No you are not!

If only it were that easy. There are a wide variety of ways that you can be “saved”, but only one of them is genuine and how would you know? *Luk 13:24 Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.* Many people push and shove to get in the narrow gate, for so it says, but shall not be able to. Some people see the narrow gate as leading to life but they just cannot get in. They think they have the key to the gate and they fumble around to no avail. If this salvation was freely available to all men, then it was not available to the people who failed to get in through the narrow gate. Jesus does not get every man in.

Matthew takes a look at the broad gate, the wide spacious way that leads to destruction, to ruin, *Mat 7:13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:* It is a similar outcome to Luke’s “narrow way”. In Matthew they get

destroyed by going down the “broad way” and in Luke they cannot get in the “narrow way”. It amounts to the same thing, namely the people are not saved. It seems as if our Lord is telling us that it is a very difficult way, whatever path you take. Jesus is perhaps not telling us about the “numbers” of people saved but the “difficulty” in getting saved.

Leaving the narrow way behind us and the people struggling to get through the narrow gate, we switch scenes, and the Lord now takes us to a house, where the owner has stood up to lock the doors of his house. The people come to the door, *“and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are”* I notice our Lord says, **“he shall answer and say unto you”**, YOU, you plural. Is He telling the crowd that they are the ones that He is speaking to, and this is not a hypothetical group of people?

“Let us in”, they cry, and very abruptly the house owner replies, *“I know you not whence ye are”*. Why do they cry out for entry, why do they want to get in? These people, poor unfortunates, appear to be the same failures that could not get through the narrow gate, and now, the house keeper will not let them in.

In case you have not seen it yet, this is another story of the Kingdom of God and what is required for entry. Having just told us about the growth of the kingdom, that it grows silently, like yeast, and that it grows large, like a mustard seed to a tree, the Lord now tells us it is difficult, but not impossible to get in, if you have the right credentials.

But the people who are locked out of the kingdom, are the very people who have eaten and drunk in His presence, and been listening to His teaching, surely He must remember them? The house owner, who is in reality Jesus, is not dealing with the hardened unbeliever, the scornful man, the blasphemers that would eventually kill Him, He is dealing with His followers.

Well that cannot be so, you say, for what follower of Jesus could be kept out of the kingdom? They are “workers of iniquity” while at the same time they eat, drink and listen to His teachings. This leads us to the conclusion that proximity to Jesus does not make us acceptable to God.

We all know of many people who are religious, who go to church on occasion, who would say that they are “Christian” and would be extremely upset if you were to question their faith. They partake of the communion, and so they “eat and drink” in His presence. They listen to snippets of His word, that is, listen to His teaching and sing hymns to Him. Yet while doing these things, they are far from Him. They might know Jesus but Jesus does not know them?

How can He say that He does not know them when He does? He knows them, about them and all there is of them but He does not have a relationship with them. Yet they apparently, know Him and seem to want to know about Him, and He does not call them hypocrites, or actors, so why does He say I never knew you.

We must ask ourselves whether we are among this group of people, the ones who have some knowledge of Jesus, but are destined to be outcasts and not to enter the kingdom of heaven. How can we know what persons we are? Why doesn't He know me? After all, I acknowledged Him. There is an answer, I believe, and it comes from a heart which is being moulded into the likeness of God's heart and being moulded into His image. If Jesus does not recognise us, then we have not got His image and we are in the state of nature.

One of the Divine attributes that is communicable to us, and there are many others, is forgiveness. If I can forgive other people, in the same manner and measure that God does, He will forgive me my sins. I can rely on this, it is immutable, *Luk 17:3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. Luk 17:4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him..... Mat 18:21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Mat 18:22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.*

I think that the people who said they knew Him, but did not really know Him, did not know the forgiveness of Christ because they could not forgive men as He did. They loved the religion, the dressing up, the forms and fixtures of it, but they could not change their ways. Their inner core was frozen in sin. I do not believe that they could not say "sorry", I forgive you, but that it did not come from within their being. They still held the sins as being real and present with them and they had not dealt with them, although outwardly they forgave.

It is the Divine act of forgiveness that we need, a total forgiveness, and He promises us that forgiveness, and because God cannot lie, we are forgiven. But that forgiveness by God, has in it, the necessity of a reciprocal forgiveness by us, *Mat 18:35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.* Here is a mark of a believer that they forgive totally and unconditionally. If you are forgiven you will enter into His kingdom, *Joh 6:37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*

There is nothing personal, nothing of a relationship with Christ, in the cry of this people, "*We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets*". It is a purely passive observation of Jesus in the common round of daily

life. So what if I, Jesus, did these things, you cannot say you are my disciples from merely seeing me in the streets or having sat with me at dinner. There is nothing in the people's cry that shows that they had a personal relationship with Jesus, they were just bystanders.

Jesus will have much more to say on this in the coming days. Eating and drinking with Him is a great privilege of the kingdom, and what He says showed that many did not treat it as such.

To those who look to Him and want to know Him, they are given a promise, *2Co 3:16 But whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 2Co 3:17 This Lord is the Spirit. Wherever the Lord's Spirit is, there is freedom. 2Co 3:18 As all of us reflect the Lord's glory with faces that are not covered with veils, we are being changed into his image with ever-increasing glory. This comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.* GW.

Am I an image bearer of God, or doesn't He know me? *Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the **image** of him that created him:* I am bearing the image, if I truly put off the old man and put on the new.

You will notice that our Lord holds no malice to the people that are opposed to Him, no railing, no calls for them to be executed by the Romans. He does not hate them, He does not deliberately alienate them, but He tells them what will be and He tells you and me what will be, so that we might avoid the judgement.

It seems to me at this stage in my life that there is, from the human point of view, no inevitability about the final condition of a man. It would be disingenuous to ask people to repent, if they could not, *Eze 18:23 Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?*

Finally, and without the radical change, man will reach the point where judgement is inevitable. *Luk 13:28 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, **in the kingdom of God**, and you yourselves thrust out. Luk 13:29 And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. Luk 13:30 And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.*

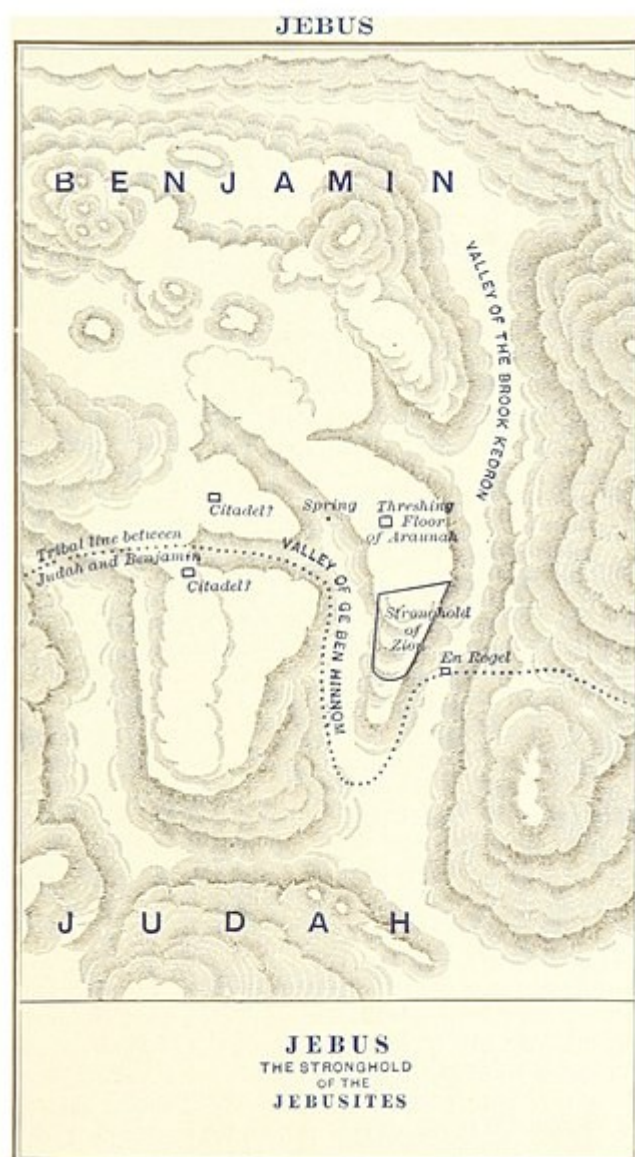
There it is, a prophecy of what will come to us if we do not take very seriously, the message of life.

124. O Jerusalem *Luke 13: 31 - 32*

Luk 13:31 The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. Luk 13:32 And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Luk 13:33 Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. Luk 13:34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Luk 13:35 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

“Certain” of the Pharisees warn Jesus that Herod wants Him dead, just like John the Baptist. I think it is a genuine warning from some of the Pharisees, because some of the Pharisees liked Him. He was to avoid Jerusalem, because Herod was a killer. Jesus is not afraid of Herod and sends them back with the a reply, *Luk 13:32 And He said to them, Going, say to that fox, Behold, today and tomorrow I cast out demons and I complete cures, and the third day I am being perfected.*

“Perfected”, τελειόω, means to complete, accomplish, or finish. Jesus could mean, “that is the end of my work” and it is the same word that He says on the Cross, *Joh 19:30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, **It is finished**: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.*



It is necessary that He, as a prophet, die in Jerusalem. Why do the prophets die in Jerusalem, the execution block of the prophets? We shall explore this.

And why does the Lord say, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem” instead of “O Israel, Israel”, why does He speak of the religious focus of the nation and not the Nation of Israel itself? Why does He lament over the capital city and its inhabitants? Let us take a brief walk through History and find out.

The place was not always called Jerusalem, *1Ch 11:4 And David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, which is Jebus; where the Jebusites were, the inhabitants of the land.* The great city was once called Jebus and its inhabitants were Jebusites.

The tribe of the Jebusites is mentioned in the time of Abraham. Gen 15:21, as being in the land of Canaan and descendants of the same, *Gen 10:15 And Canaan begat Sidon his firstborn, and Heth, Gen 10:16 And the Jebusite, and the Amorite, and the Girgasite, Gen 10:17 And the Hivite, and the Arkite, and the Sinite.*

After defeating the confederation of kings that took his nephew Lot, Abraham was blessed by a mysterious character called Melchizedek, *Gen 14:18 And Melchizedek **king of Salem** brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. Gen 14:19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:* It has been suggested that he was from Jerusalem and the Jebusite king of Salem.

When Israel came to conquer the Promised Land, they were told to exterminate the inhabitants, *Deu 20:17 But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and **the Jebusites**; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee:* This was typical of removing sin from the life of the believer as He inherits the kingdom. But that was easier said than done.

The Israelites defeated Adonizedek (the name is similar to Melchizedek) when they entered the land, *Jos 10:1 Now it came to pass, when Adonizedek king of Jerusalem had heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it; as he had done to Jericho and her king, so he had done to Ai and her king; and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel, and were among them; Jos 10:2 That they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all the men thereof were mighty.* But Jerusalem was never conquered. *Jos 15:63 As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, **the children of Judah could not drive them out**: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day.*

Right up to the time of the Judges of Israel, they could not defeat the Jebusites, *Jdg 1:21 And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day.* It went 400 years or so, without being captured, from Moses time to David's time, *1Ki 6:1 And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD.*

David eventually conquered the Jebusites, *2Sa 5:4 David was thirty years old when he became king, and he ruled for forty years. 2Sa 5:5 He lived in Hebron for the first seven and a half years and ruled only Judah. Then he moved to Jerusalem, where he ruled both Israel and Judah for thirty-three years. 2Sa 5:6 The Jebusites lived in Jerusalem, and David led his army there to attack them. The Jebusites did not think he could get in, so they told him, "You can't get in here! We could run you off, even if we couldn't see or walk!" 2Sa 5:7 David told his troops, "You will have to go up through the water tunnel to get those Jebusites. I hate people like them who can't walk or see." That's why there is still a rule that says, "Only people who can walk and see are allowed in the temple." David **captured the fortress on Mount Zion, then he moved there and named it David's City.** He had the city rebuilt, starting with the landfill to the east. CEV.*

How the Jebusites survived as long as they did, isolated and surrounded, is not clear. I think that the people were half-hearted in removing them, like one of the "little sins" which we love to keep close, and do not get rid of.

David does conquer Jerusalem, but he does not kill all the inhabitants, and he even buys the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. *2Sa 24:21 And Araunah said, Wherefore is my lord the king come to his servant? And David said, To buy the threshingfloor of thee, to build an altar unto the LORD, **that the plague may be stayed from the people.** 2Sa 24:22 And Araunah said unto David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what seemeth good unto him: behold, here be oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments and other instruments of the oxen for wood. 2Sa 24:23 All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king. And Arana said unto the king, The LORD thy God accept thee. 2Sa 24:24 And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.* Araunah is also known as Ornan in the book of Chronicles.

David had been led by satan to number the people, and the Lord punished him with a plague on Israel but had stopped His killing spree at this very spot, *2Sa 24:16 And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the*

*people, It is enough: stay now thine hand. **And the angel of the LORD was by the threshingplace of Araunah the Jebusite.***

There is a spiritual story here I think. God's people having been plagued, having wandered in the wilderness worshipping God, come to the place where they are threshed as wheat. Purged of their sin, the place becomes a memorial of sacrifice and atonement. The dead in Christ are under the altar, *Rev 6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:* The altar of Araunah becomes the Temple of God.

So the plague was stopped at the very place where the Temple of Solomon was built, *2Ch 3:1 Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.*

The religious focus of the nation, its home, goes from a wandering tabernacle to a permanent building in the Temple at Jerusalem. Its priestly system, goes from a nomadic conquering tribe of Jacob, to Israel and the Levites, and a consecrated Temple in the city of Jerusalem, built physically upon the ancient worship of the Jebusites. There, the system of sacrifice and offerings grew into a business. *Luk 19:45 And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; Luk 19:46 Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.*

While the worship and service looked good on paper, while theoretically it seemed alright, it was far from good practically. The cyclic nature of faith and apostasy is seen in the times of the Judges of Israel, as soon as Israel entered to Promised Land. The Israelites did not drive out the inhabitants of the land which became a thorn in their side, *Jdg 2:1 And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. Jdg 2:2 And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? Jdg 2:3 Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.*

This is an example of how the cyclic nature of faith happened, from decline to sin, to revival and forgiveness, to decline and sin, and there are many examples, *Jdg 3:7 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God, and served Baalim and the groves. Jdg 3:8 Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushanrishathaim eight years. Jdg 3:9 And when the children of Israel cried*

unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

The people got chastised and they cried to God and He raised up a Judge who delivered them, but afterwards they lapsed into complacency and sin, and the whole process began again. Rise and fall, such that we can sum up the period of the Judges by the last verse in the book, *Jdg 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.* For 400 years the people had done as they wished, from Othniel to Samson, the people were little different from those around them, and they were only as good as their Judges.

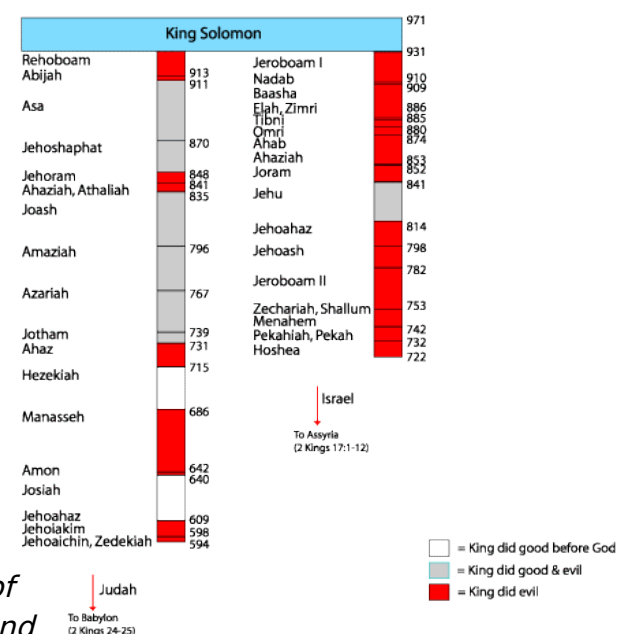
Jesus, the archetypal Judge, could well have said of this period of time, *Luk 13:34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and **ye would not!***

Not that a king made it better for the nation. They continued to disobey the Law while retaining an outward piety, for example, the land sabbath was clearly detailed, *Lev 25:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the LORD. Lev 25:3 Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; Lev 25:4 But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard,* it was not kept throughout the period of the kings, and was the reason given for Israel's captivity, *2Ch 36:21 To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.*

70 years rest was given to the land which was 70 Sabbath years, or 70 land Sabbaths. The people had not kept the land Sabbath for 70 x 7 years or 490 years (every 7th year was the land Sabbath). This was for the whole period of the Kings, from King Saul to Zedekiah.

Israel the nation became split after Solomon, into Israel and Judah, but was still called the nation of Israel. Israel rebelled against the Lord often through the period of the kings. There were predominantly kings that did evil, or a mix of evil and good. Not only were the nations around them going to crash and burn, Israel was headed in the same direction, and ultimately captivity and exile.

THE KINGS OF ISRAEL & JUDAH



Jerusalem was sacked and burnt and its treasure carried away to Babylon, 2Ch 36:17 *Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand. 2Ch 36:18 And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon. 2Ch 36:19 And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. 2Ch 36:20 And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia:*

Yet again the words of Jesus may be heard. Luk 13:34 *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and **ye would not!***

125. O Jerusalem Luke 13: 33 - 35 cont...

Luk 13:33 *Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. Luk 13:34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Luk 13:35 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

We have been exploring the history of Israel, and it is clear that everything was not as rosy as people like to think, because despite the high aspirations that Moses Law brought to the Nation of Israel, in practise they fell far short of it.

Nehemiah sums up this paradox between the theory and practice of service to God when he says, Neh 9:24 *So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would. Neh 9:25 And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness. Neh 9:26 Nevertheless **they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and***

cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations. Neh 9:27 Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies. Neh 9:28 But after they had rest, they did evil again before thee: therefore leftest thou them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them: yet when they returned, and cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and many times didst thou deliver them according to thy mercies; Neh 9:29 And testifiedst against them, that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, (which if a man do, he shall live in them;) and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear. Neh 9:30 **Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands.**

Nehemiah spoke these words after the fall of Jerusalem, and they were a fitting epitaph for the nation of Israel.

The prophets were a key intervention, to bring the people back to God when they apostatised but this intervention was not, in many cases well received. For example, 2Ch 24:20 *And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you.* 2Ch 24:21 *And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD.* 2Ch 24:22 *Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, The LORD look upon it, and require it.*

Jerusalem, the cult centre of the Nation's religion, the city of the kings of Judah, a royal city, became byword for apostasy. Solomon is given this warning from the Lord. 1Ki 9:6 *But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them:* 1Ki 9:7 *Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people:* 1Ki 9:8 ***And at this house, which is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss; and they shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and to this house?*** 1Ki 9:9 *And they shall answer, Because they forsook the LORD their*

God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the LORD brought upon them all this evil.

When the Lord says, “*for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem*”, it is evident that many prophets did die away from Jerusalem. The prophets that Jezebel killed for example were put to death in the northern kingdom of Ahab. I think that our Lord is using “Jerusalem” as the focus of the Nation that Jerusalem stands for, the religious nation of Israel. When He uses the term “Jerusalem” it encompasses the whole of the sacrificial system, the imagery of the Temple, the throne of the kings, the Promised Land, the Priesthood, all of this with the Lord God at its centre.

Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the Temple shows this national focus clearly, *1Ki 8:46 If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near; 1Ki 8:47 Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; 1Ki 8:48 And so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name: 1Ki 8:49 **Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause.*** (Read the whole of chapter eight of the book of 1 Kings to see how important Jerusalem was).

If people turned back to God, and they did so by looking towards Jerusalem, from wherever they had been exiled, then God would take them back. Jerusalem became the focus of the nation and a conduit for prayer. When Daniel, in captivity in Babylon, is told by the king to be silent and not pray to his God, he immediately throws his windows open and prays towards Jerusalem, *Dan 6:10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber **toward Jerusalem**, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.*

The Israelite leaders did not just ignore the prophets, and because the prophets seriously undermined the political aspirations of Israel, they were deemed as revolutionaries, overthrowing the rule of the governors, *Jer 38:1 Then Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashur the son of Malchiah, heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken unto all the people, saying, Jer 38:2 Thus saith the LORD, He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the*

*pestilence: but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live. Jer 38:3 Thus saith the LORD, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which shall take it. Jer 38:4 Therefore the princes said unto the king, **We beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city,** and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt. The only good prophet according to them was a dead prophet.*

To some, this became a holocaust, as with the case of Jezebel and king Ahab, who were determined to get rid of the prophets, but Obadiah, the governor of their house managed to save some, *1Ki 18:13 Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the LORD, how I hid an hundred men of the LORD'S prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?*

Even the prophet Elijah thought he was the last man standing, *1Ki 19:14 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.....1Ki 19:18 Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him. I take these 7,000 to be prophets.*

There were clearly a large number of prophets in Elijah's day and in other times of the nation of Israel. In the time of Saul, *1Sa 10:10 And when they came thither to the hill, behold, **a company of prophets** met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.* In the time of Elisha, *2Ki 4:38 And Elisha came again to Gilgal: and there was a dearth in the land; and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him: and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and seethe pottage for **the sons of the prophets**.* The prophet was not an isolated figure but was often affiliated to a group of prophets.

In the New Testament the prophets are very much in evidence, *1Co 14:3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.* They are one of the foundational ministries of the Gospel, *Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: They build up the body of Christ, that is God's people.*

But where are they today? Are the prophets denouncing the false religion of the age today? They cannot denounce it because they are for the most part within the denominational systems that propagate false religion. They cannot deny themselves so they keep quiet on these issues. The true prophet has these characteristics, *Deu 18:18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their*

*brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and **he shall speak unto them all that I shall command** him. Deu 18:19 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. Deu 18:20 But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. Deu 18:21 And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? Deu 18:22 When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.* Both the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Anglicans, amongst others, are demonstrably false prophets.

But I digress slightly from where I was going. I think we can see where the nation of Israel was headed and it was not going to go well with them. It was leading up to a clash with the Sanhedrin, the religious body representing Judaism. This was a body of seventy men and the word "Sanhedrin" is a combination of two Greek words meaning, "seated together". The number was probably patterned after the seventy elders of Israel that the Lord established under Moses, *Num 11:16 And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. Num 11:17 And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone.*

You may be searching in vain for the word "Sanhedrin" or "Sanhedrim" in the AV because they have rendered it "council". Darby gives the correct rendering, Sanhedrim, for example in, *Mat 26:59 And the chief priests and the elders and **the whole sanhedrim** sought false witness against Jesus, so that they might put him to death.* This body of men are related to the 70 in Moses day, but unlike them, they did not prophecy the truth, *Num 11:24 And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the LORD, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle. Num 11:25 And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, **they prophesied, and did not cease.***

The Sanhedrin would pronounce the sentence upon Jesus, as representatives of the Nation of Israel. It was a judicial sentence on behalf of Israel, through its religious representatives, and that is why the prophets that were sent to rebuke the Nation of Israel had to be killed in Jerusalem. This body of false prophets would stand against the true prophet, that Prophet that Moses spoke of, and kill him also, *Luk 13:34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and*

stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

The fox, Herod, was in among the chickens also, *Act 4:26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. Act 4:27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together.*

In summary, we have seen Israel, generation after generation, failing in obedience to the Lord. To bring the people back, God sent prophets, but many were killed and eventually the nation suffered captivity. It is like the parable the Lord gave about the “vineyard”, *Luk 20:9 Then began he to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time. After the husbandmen, γεωργός, land workers, had been rejected, the owner of the vineyard sent his son, Luk 20:13 Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him. Luk 20:14 But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. Luk 20:15 So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?*

Israel was the vineyard of the Lord, *Isa 5:6 And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. Isa 5:7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry. The nation would not have God as their Saviour and Lord, Isa 65:1 I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name. Isa 65:2 I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; Isa 65:3 A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick;*

Christ would gather them together, but they did not want Him, “*how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!*” All through the history of Israel, Christ had called them, “*how often would I have gathered thy children together*”, not just in Jesus day, but since He existed in all ages, He called them in all ages, from the first time of the nation coming into existence, and from before. Christ was willing to gather them gather them under His wing, but no, they did not want Him. Here we see the timelessness of Jesus, the Son of God, present in every age, and

being rejected in every age, *Joh 1:11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*

Who looks to that old nation of Israel to be restored, to be given a place in the Kingdom of God when they openly rejected Christ? Only a remnant shall be saved, and so our Lord concludes with the words, *Luk 13:35 Behold, **your house is left unto you desolate**: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

126. Another Sabbath Healing Luke 14: 1 - 6

Luk 14:1 And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him. Luk 14:2 And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy. Luk 14:3 And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? Luk 14:4 And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go; Luk 14:5 And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day? Luk 14:6 And they could not answer him again to these things.

A few weeks ago we looked at an identical story of “Sabbath healing”, *Luk 13:14 And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. Luk 13:15 The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?*

We concluded that,

The ruler of the Synagogue thought more of the farmyard animals than he did of human beings. He thought this because he thought that the laws he had invented, were greater than God’s laws. He did not even see the inconsistency and double standards that he was applying to the Law. But then, he saw the law as being separate from the things the Law protected. He saw the law as an unfeeling machine without understanding, which had to be obeyed at all cost, even when he was in ignorance of its purpose.

The ruler of the Synagogue showed he loved the Law, he executed a form of judgement, he believed in God, so he had faith but one thing he lacked. **Mercy**. It was the vital ingredient which he lacked and it made him into a hypocrite as it does us also.

The two stories are so close together that is almost screaming at us to go deeper and find more about our duties, and so we take another look. The man healed this time has dropsy, ὕδρωπικός, swelling under the skin, and is generally known today as 'oedema' or 'edema'. In edema, the area under the skin (the interstitium) fills with fluid. The major underlying causes of dropsy are congestive heart failure, liver failure, kidney failure, and malnutrition.

Jesus tries to provoke a comment on the healing, but they keep silent. It is so sad that the people are more concerned that He doesn't do a work on the Sabbath, than that this poor specimen of humanity is made well. There is also another thing that comes out of this story and it is that their Pharisaical concern for their animals, which worked for them, ranked much higher than their concern for the weak and crippled of society which probably did no work. The economically useless were deemed less useful than animals.

Jesus knew that they would pull their ox and ass out of a hole or lead them to water on the Sabbath day and for whatever reason, they did not consider this to be work. What was the reasoning behind this?

Oxen and asses were working animals, not simply animals raised for food, but they were also clean and unclean animals, *Lev 11:3 Whatsoever **parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat.** Lev 11:4 Nevertheless these shall ye not eat of them **that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof:** as the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.* The ox was clean Levitically because it ate grass and had split hooves. The ass was Levitically unclean because it ate grass but did not have split hooves.

That little difference meant that you could not eat a dead donkey, but you could eat a dead ox. But while they were alive you could ride them and touch them and there would be no problem. You just had to be careful about teaming up the different breeds of the animals, clean and unclean animals together, *Deu 22:10 Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.*

Of course, it wasn't that God's concern was for the animals, it was an object lesson for us, *1Co 9:9 Moses' Teachings say, "Never muzzle an ox when it is threshing grain." God's concern isn't for oxen. 1Co 9:10 Isn't he speaking entirely for our benefit? This was written for our benefit so that the person who plows or threshes should expect to receive a share of the crop.....1Ti 5:18 For the*

scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.

The animals around your small holding were intended to make you think about God's laws and how they applied to you. The tiny little ant was made to remind you not to be lazy, *Pro 6:6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Pro 6:7 Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Pro 6:8 Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.* The sheep were made to teach us about obedience and following the Shepherd, *Joh 10:27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: Joh 10:28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*

The ox and ass were similarly given by God as an object lesson of loyalty, *Isa 1:3 **The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib:** but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Isa 1:4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.*

The ox and the ass were chosen as an illustration of loyalty and obedience because they represent the clean and the unclean creatures, the believing Jew and the believing Gentile, the remnant that would obey the master. When the Pharisees looked upon them, he could see the truth of the opening verses of Isaiah. When Jesus introduces the ox and the ass, it should have caused the Pharisees a twinge of conscience.

The self interest of the Pharisees had a darker meaning and deeper root. Their care for the animals was out of enlightened self interest and it was purely selfish. If it benefits you, you do something about it, and if it doesn't benefit you do nothing. They were the selfish, self-interested beings putting themselves number one, first.



Selfish is defined as being concerned excessively or exclusively with oneself: seeking or concentrating on one's own advantage, pleasure, or well-being without regard for others. It shows itself in the parable of the king who took an inventory of his servants, also called "the parable of the unforgiving servant", *Mat 18:23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.*

The servant was forgiven a debt but he would not forgive his fellow servants their debts, *Mat 18:33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy*

fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? Mat 18:34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. Mat 18:35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. The servant lacked the servant mentality which always sees the condition of others. *Mat 20:26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; Mat 20:27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Mat 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

Selfishness is expecting others to sacrifice for you. **Altruism** is sacrificing yourself for others. **Generosity** is helping others without hurting yourself. **Altruism** is shown in, *Rom 5:6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Rom 5:7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. Rom 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

Henry Ward Beecher said, “**Selfishness** is that detestable vice which no one will forgive in others, and no one is without himself.” This is a good summary of selfishness:

We live in a world of unquenchable greed and selfishness. We see it all around us. And often lament its existence:

- We lash out against the greed of politicians.
- We despise the self-serving culture of corporate greed.
- We argue against those who spend massive resources pushing their agenda.
- We protest the selfish motives of many wars and ruling parties.
- We cry out against the injustice of unnecessary poverty and hunger.

With little or no effort, we recognize the ugly effects of greed and selfishness on our society, culture, and nations. The greed of others makes this world a less pleasurable place to live for all of us. We wish they would change for the sake of everyone. In some cases, we even unify and protest to pressure them to change.

All the while, our personal greed rarely goes challenged. Recognizing the negative effects of corporate selfishness is easy. But identifying our own selfish motivation is more difficult to accomplish. It is, after all, far more painful to discover and admit. As a result, we rarely recognize how selfishness within us is...

- contributing to the feelings of jealousy we experience.
- causing strife in our relationships with others.
- negatively impacting our relationship with our spouse.
- motivating so many of the unhealthy decisions we make with our money.
- preventing us from meeting the apparent needs of others.
- keeping us from experiencing love, joy, hope, gratitude, generosity.
- hindering us from finding true contentment.

That is quite a good summary of what selfishness does to us. Living inside our bubble that we call self, we seldom think about whether we are being selfish or not. We just presume we are normal and do not question ourselves about it. Like those Pharisees, they only considered the actions that they thought were important. They loved themselves and did not think much about anyone else. They loved themselves to pieces.

It's like the modern disease of "loving yourself" or "low self esteem" to give it another name. We are told that we don't love ourselves enough, like this article, **"33 Ways to Love Yourself More",**

Self-love is an important part of self-care. When you're ready to reset and recharge, you can use these tips as inspiration to love yourself more. The concept of self-love is simple: it just means valuing and caring for your own needs, wants, and desires. It isn't about being selfish (sic!). It's about making sure you have time to recharge to have the energy and resources to be there for others. As airlines like to remind us, it's important to put on your own oxygen mask before helping others do the same. Because if *you* run out of air, it becomes a lot harder to help anyone, including yourself.

You know, you do not have to be told to love yourself, you do it naturally. You make choices about things like what to wear, what to eat, what to drink, where to live etc, all decisions made on what you like, what you love. We just love ourselves to pieces and do anything that makes us feel good. I don't believe the people who tell us to love ourselves, because we already do, they are just reinforcing our self love and the devil applauds that. And what about self esteem? That merely reinforces self love.

This article is from the NHS website,

We all have times when we lack confidence and do not feel good about ourselves. But when low self-esteem becomes a long-term problem, it can have a harmful effect on our mental health and our day-to-day lives. Self-esteem is the opinion we have of ourselves.

When we have healthy self-esteem, we tend to feel positive about ourselves and about life in general. It makes us better able to deal with life's ups and downs.

This is equally selfish, putting self at the centre of attention. The Bible says, *Mat 22:39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour **as thyself**.* The Bible reckons that we don't have a problem loving ourselves, we just do it, its spilling out that love to our neighbours that is the problem. And low self esteem isn't a failure on your part, as a Christian, it's a laudable virtue, *Php 2:3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each **esteem other better than themselves**.* You should have a lower self esteem because as a Christian you esteem others better than yourselves.

The Pharisees and us Christians are too self absorbed to see the problems of self. We direct our energy on working for self, putting our energy into directing our efforts inwards, rather than looking outwards, seeing how others live, what their need are, and most importantly, how we can help them.

Jesus was outside of Himself. He saw what others didn't see and He knew that the law did men good. The Pharisees were a problem, not so for the man with dropsy, he was rejoicing. The Pharisees were a problem because their disease was going to get into His disciples if He did not do something about it, *Luk 14:6 And they could not answer him again to these things.*

127. The Wedding Feast *Luke 14: 7 - 11*

Luk 14:7 And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, Luk 14:8 When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; Luk 14:9 And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. Luk 14:10 But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. Luk 14:11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

We continue at the house of the Pharisee where Jesus is having a meal and it should not surprise us because although some Pharisees were extremely dogmatic, others were prepared to listen and discuss or argue with Him. He has already exposed their selfishness. He now tackles another sin of the Pharisees, pride. Another version of Scripture might make it easier to see what is going on.

Luk 14:7 Jesus saw how the guests had tried to take the best seats. So he told them: Luk 14:8 When you are invited to a wedding feast, don't sit in the best place. Someone more important may have been invited. Luk 14:9 Then the one who invited you will come and say, "Give your place to this other guest!" You will be embarrassed and will have to sit in the worst place. Luk 14:10 When you are invited to be a guest, go and sit in the worst place. Then the one who invited you may come and say, "My friend, take a better seat!" You will then be honoured in front of all the other guests. Luk 14:11 If you put yourself above others, you will be put down. But if you humble yourself, you will be honoured. CEV.

It reminds me of a similar set of verses, Jas 2:1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. Jas 2:2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; Jas 2:3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Jas 2:4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Jas 2:5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

Both sets of verses say the same thing that we should not think of our self more than we are, either by grabbing the best places at a feast or by putting those we deem less worthy in the cheap seats. Its the same attitude in both cases, thinking we are better than we are. As we have said, "We are usually over optimistic when comparing ourselves to other people, like when we assess our driving and generally we are among the 90 per cent who say that they are better than average". We are naturally better than anyone else, it stands to reason or does it?

In the field of social psychology, it's called illusory superiority and is a condition of cognitive bias, which is thinking or reasoning bias, where a person overestimates their own qualities and abilities, in relation to the same qualities and abilities of other people. Illusory superiority is one of many positive illusions, relating to the self, that are evident in the study of intelligence. Overestimation of abilities compared to an objective measure is known as the overconfidence effect. The Dunning-Kruger effect is a form of illusory superiority shown by people on a task where their level of skill is low. The unskilled person is the supreme expert, and we looked at this recently.

The Pharisaical superiority is certainly an illusion, and we see how they saw themselves compared with other men. Take for example the Pharisee who prayed in public, who did not take time to get to know others because, "**he stood by himself**". He was too good to mix with tax collectors and prostitutes,

too righteous to pollute himself with their sad presence, *Luk 18:9 Jesus told a story to some people who thought they were better than others and who looked down on everyone else: Luk 18:10 Two men went into the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. Luk 18:11 The Pharisee stood over by himself and prayed, "God, I thank you that I am not greedy, dishonest, and unfaithful in marriage like other people. And I am really glad that I am not like that tax collector over there. Luk 18:12 I go without eating for two days a week, and I give you one tenth of all I earn."* CEV.

Wait a minute, do we pray the same prayer as the Pharisee? Do we smugly rejoice that we are not greedy while constantly lusting after some new thing, idly thumbing the pages of the Argos catalogue? Do we remind God that we are not dishonest, while keeping as much of God's money as we can, under the guise of prudence? Do we never look at another man or woman with lust in our heart and say, I do not commit adultery? Do I even fast as the Pharisee said he fasted or do I excuse myself of that obligation? Do I even give 1 percent of my income, let alone the tithe, and excuse myself because that only happened under law? In some matters the Pharisees are way ahead of us in the righteousness stakes.

Do I think that I am better than others, holier than other people? *Isa 65:3 A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick; Isa 65:4 Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; Isa 65:5 **Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou.** These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.*

We listen to God's word but we do not do it, *Eze 33:30 Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD. Eze 33:31 And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.*

It reminded me of a scene from the movie "Paper Moon" where the Ryan O'Neil's character, Moses Pray, says to his little daughter, "And stop standing around here checking on me! You don't have to worry. I ain't about to leave some poor little child stranded in the middle of nowhere. I've got scruples too, ya know. You know what that is... scruples?" to which she replies, "No, I don't know what it is but if you've got 'em, it's a sure bet they belong to somebody else!" Yes, if we have any virtues, they sure do belong to somebody else.

The Germans had the same attitude towards the Jews, they thought they were better than them but they were another bunch of thugs and murderers called

Nazi's. All people who look down on some races as being inferior are themselves Pharisees. We Christians can be just the same as those people we despise.

We think that we make ourselves virtuous as we go on in the faith. We think that we independently get better, after Christ gave us a starting hand up, then we become right all by ourselves. Why, we can then say with the Pharisee, *"God, I thank you that I am not greedy, dishonest, and unfaithful in marriage like other people"*, but that is just the point, we have become Pharisees, by daring to claim any of these things for ourselves.

No, that is not the way that we become Christ like, *Php 3:8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, Php 3:9 And be found in him, **not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:** Php 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; Php 3:11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.*

Here's a passage from Jeremy Edgar, on "When Slamming Pharisees Makes You a Pharisee", that makes this point.

Pharisees deserve the criticism they get from the Lord. Jesus doesn't misjudge or mistreat anyone, and his attack on their pride of self and disdain for others is perfectly justified. Pharisees think they are righteous because they compare themselves to other people. They think they stack up pretty well against the common sinner, and so they believe that God is rather impressed with them. Jesus showed us that is not the case. God is frustrated with their refusal to humble themselves and recognize that he sees not only the actions of the body but also the motives of the heart. God is not pleased with a cleaned up life when our hearts are full of ugly things.

And so those of us who reject man-made religion and self-righteousness (which we ought) are quick to come alongside Jesus and slam the Pharisees. We call people out on their hypocrisy and pride. We reject the traditions of men that override the Word of God. We are full of disdain for those who would think too highly of themselves. And so we run in the exact opposite direction. We throw off unbiblical rules and refuse to act superior to common sinners. We intentionally do the opposite of what Pharisees do. We become, as it were, **anti-Pharisees**.

Here's the problem. Unlike Jesus, it is common that in our opposition of Pharisees we actually become one. Think about it. Pharisees define themselves by comparing themselves to other people. So do anti-Pharisees. While the Pharisee compares himself favourably to sinners, anti-Pharisee compares himself favourably to Pharisees. A Pharisee looks down on someone unlike him, and so does the anti-Pharisee. In his stance against pride, the anti-Pharisee actually assumes a position of pride. He looks at those trapped in self-righteous religion, those who judge others and think themselves to be better, and recoils in disgust. He thinks to himself, *How can they not see their pride? Don't they know they are a sinner too? It makes me sick. Those stinkin' Pharisees are just the worst. Thank God I'm not like that!*

The anti-Pharisee is actually a Pharisee at heart. Even though they seem to take a hard stance against religion and self-righteousness, they end up becoming religious and self-righteous. If we are not careful, we will look at the person who says "Thank God I'm not like other people" and then think to ourselves "Thank God I'm not like them".

If we can become a Pharisee by opposing them, should we stop doing it? The answer is no, but we need to do it in the right way. Jesus had no problem opposing the mindset of a Pharisee. He had some harsh words about it. But there is one sense in which we cannot *exactly* follow Jesus' steps in this matter. Unlike us, Jesus was sinless, and therefore he did not fall into the trap of pride like we can.

So how can we still be against the Pharisee mindset while not becoming one? **By comparing ourselves to God and not to others.** The Pharisee in Luke 18 commends himself by comparing himself to others (sinners). The anti-Pharisee likewise commends himself by comparing himself to others (Pharisees). However, the true believer commends himself by comparing himself to God, realizing his failures, and crying out for mercy. In this way he is not commending himself at all, but rather admitting he is not commendable. In the parable of Luke 18, only the individual who compares himself not to others but to God and cries out for mercy actually receives it.

It can be tempting to want to slam Pharisees, no holds barred. That appears to be what Jesus did, and so we feel good in jumping in. But we must approach it in a different manner. Yes, it is right to oppose self-righteousness, but not by becoming a different kind of self-righteous yourself. Rather, we oppose self-righteousness by advocating for God-righteousness. We don't pridefully compare ourselves to others, but become humble in confessing that we ourselves don't

measure up. We don't get enjoyment out of slamming Pharisees, because in doing so we become one. Rather we oppose Pharisees while having great love for them and realizing we are a lot more like them than we may first imagine.

Yes we are a lot like them. We Christians want to be religious and we want to do what is right but we have an awful way of doing it. Whether we are Pharisees, anti-Pharisees or even neo-Pharisees, we are still Pharisees. Put the verse in Luke another way and see if the hat fits, "The Christian stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Pharisee".

You can see this attitude in so many religious denominations and among their acolytes. They have this holier than thou attitude, I know more than you attitude, I am totally right and you are wrong, my church is better than your church and instead of them comparing themselves with me, another sinner, they should compare themselves with Christ. They don't look so good when they do this, do they? *2Co 10:12 For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.*

We are disgusted at the immature attitude of the Pharisees, and if we think about it, we are no better. The Lord's conclusion is to us also, *Luk 14:11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* As Peter reiterates, *1Pe 5:6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:*

128. Feasting *Luke 14: 12 - 15*

Luk 14:12 Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. Luk 14:13 But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: Luk 14:14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. Luk 14:15 And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

We closed last time seeing, with disgust, the immature attitude of the Pharisees, and we saw that we are no better. They had a superior attitude, born of prejudice, but they did not know how to get in to the Kingdom of Christ. They relied upon their heritage, upon their connection with Abraham, a purely earthly genetic relationship. They needed a new operating system but they did not see

anything wrong with the old one. They kept looking back for their credentials and not to Christ.

We have seen, at the beginning of this meal with the Pharisees that Jesus shows that they have a few things wrong in their belief structure. They think its right to favour working animals over needy people. They think that they make the rules and are entitled to the best seats in the house. Now there is a lesson in giving to those who will not pay you back for your hospitality, because they cannot pay you back. This is particularly addressed to the man who gave the feast, *Luk 14:12 Then Jesus said to the man who had invited him:* CEV.

That puts a bit of a dampener on things, after all, if the Pharisee had not been kind enough to invite Jesus in the first place, then there would not have been much for Luke to write about in chapter 14 of his gospel. The fact that the Pharisee invites someone, Jesus and some of His disciples, who will not be able to pay him back, is the very illustration of what Jesus is saying. So why tell the Pharisee off for doing the right thing?

The man who had dropsy, was in the house too for a while, *Luk 14:1 And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him. Luk 14:2 And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.* He had probably been invited to test Jesus, and this might be a clue as to why they were all there, but he didn't stay and after he was healed he left, *Luk 14:4 But they did not say a word. Jesus took hold of the man. Then he healed him and sent him away.* CEV.

What was the motive for inviting Jesus to come to dinner? Was Jesus to be the "entertainment", the butt of jokes, someone to create the laughs, someone who could be shown as lesser than the Pharisees? Well, if that was true it did not work as Jesus has a response for everything.

I think that the answer is much simpler than that, perhaps the Pharisee thought that by inviting Jesus, he would in turn get a seat at the heavenly feast, *Luk 14:15 And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.* It was "quid pro quo", the giving of something for something. If the Pharisee invited Jesus, Jesus would invite him. The Pharisee was setting up the obligation for Jesus to return the favour. The men heard the conversation and presumed Jesus would invite the man to His heavenly feast.

But Jesus wanted them to make dinner for the poor and needy, "*When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee*". He wanted men to make a feast for the people who could not pay them back, not for friends and family.

But wait a minute, didn't Jesus invite his disciples, His friends, to a feast in celebration of Passover, *Joh 15:14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Joh 15:15 Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.*

Jesus is not saying that it is wrong to socialise or that we should not invite friends and family to eat with us, but that all carries the idea of returning the favour. We should not invite people with this in mind, fostering the idea that we now have an invitation to go back at some time to their house for a meal. That is not the point of a meal.

There is a difference between the compulsory festivals and private parties. The feasts of the Lord are prominently mentioned in Leviticus 23, Numbers 28-29 and Deuteronomy 16. Whereas Deuteronomy 16 stresses the pilgrimages to the feasts, Numbers 28-29 emphasizes the offerings, and Leviticus 23 focuses on the feasts themselves.

It was a religious duty to celebrate before God, whatever the occasion, together with the poor of the land, *Isa 58:7 Share your food with everyone who is hungry; share your home with the poor and homeless. Give clothes to those in need; don't turn away your relatives. Isa 58:8 Then your light will shine like the dawning sun, and you will quickly be healed. Your honesty will protect you as you advance, and the glory of the LORD will defend you from behind. CEV*

The poor people of Israel were entitled under God, to the same food providence as the rich, *Deu 14:27 And the Levite that is within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee. Deu 14:28 At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: Deu 14:29 And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.* There are many scriptures which say this and the principle spills over from God's feasts to our private feasts.

The poor are always with us, *Mat 26:11 For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.* When we think of the poor, the pictures from Africa come to mind, and they have a hard time. In 2019, 478 million people lived in extreme poverty, it is estimated that in 2021, 490 million people in Africa live under the poverty line of 1.90 \$/day, and this is 37 million people more than what were projected without the pandemic.

Compared with Africa our “poor” people are positively blooming. In our 21st century western world we do not see the real poverty that exists, in fact we invent our poverty, and somebody even said that it was hard to live on £30,000 a year and they had to use a food bank to survive. Back in 1965 a labourer would earn about £624 per year. That’s £12,000 a year in today’s money (2023). There were no food banks, and you seldom heard of people getting behind in the rent or gas or electricity. Yes, I know, it was a different world back then, but the thing that has changed, is what we think we are entitled to have, and the amount of non-essential goods and services we buy today. I look for poor people and I do not see them, but maybe it’s about where I live and what I consider poor?

I do not want to get into what causes poverty, but how we can do “due diligence” to the poor and follow Jesus command, to be hospitable. Not many people have occasion to invite someone who is not a family member or friend for a meal. Even then, I would estimate that we don’t have many meals a year with family and friends. It’s not a huge problem we face in being hospitable, and I don’t think we should be overawed with the task that Jesus presents us with. He says, “**when** thou makest a feast”.

It’s not just the poor though, is it? It’s the crippled, the disabled and the blind, people whose ills we are not familiar with. They may be harder to deal with, need some facility to help them, and before we know it we have argued ourselves against doing it, because the inconvenience of having them to dinner is seemingly too great. What do we do with them if they come? Well I can only say, treat them as you would any other person, because I am sure they don’t like being the way that they are, and you and I can give them a sense of belonging to this greater family of Christ, who are on the same journey.

It doesn’t say that you have to make a soup kitchen, or a homeless shelter to feed the poor, or that you have to have them round for a meal every day, but “**when**” you make a meal, you should invite the poor, the crippled, the disabled and the blind, or as we say today, the disadvantaged. Whether or not you go out of your way to meet these people in the course of daily life or whether you hide yourself from them is the first hurdle we have to overcome. We can read the Scripture as theory and avoid the practice of contacting the disadvantaged, as a means of escaping the obligation. Like the Pharisees, we naturally evade contact with those we deem as unworthy, and so we do not see a lot of these people.

You can isolate yourself as the Pharisee did from other men. You can regard the rest of men as inferior to you and you become an elite person. Like the Germans in the last war, or the Americans who practiced eugenics, or the British who viewed other races as inferior, which was shown by Darwin, or like the South Africans who practiced Apartheid, or the Australians who isolated the indigenous Aboriginal population. We have different names for what these people did but

essentially they are all the same, and are any of them any different from the Nazis, who took it to the extreme of exterminating the Jews?

And if I may digress slightly, this shows how “science”, so called, had racial theories that became mainstream but now are bought to nothing. You fools followed these charlatans, the experts, the professionals, the scientists, who taught it as fact, in the same way that evolution is taught as fact and you believe them. But God’s word spoke against both errors.

If you kill someone by neglecting them or if you kill them deliberately, it is the same thing, and the Pharisee killed by neglect, he thought he was too good, too self righteous to have anything to do with the other Jews. They were just like the Nazis in this respect and can we honestly excuse ourselves from all traces of prejudice, like those Pharisees? I am beginning to think that the Pharisees stand for all religions and religious people, who show a misguided approach to the truth.

Before we even think about getting to the subject of a meal, we should give serious attention to our attitude to the disadvantaged. We are just like the Pharisees who do not even consider inviting such persons to a meal, they are just not on our radar. Of course, we do “good works” but they are the things convenient to us, things we feel comfortable with and heaven help if they are not. But Jesus suddenly gets us out of our comfort zone and we begin to see that our good works were not that good, because they were for our benefit, and we did what we wanted, because it made us feel good.

Jesus brings us right back to our care for our fellows and what really counts in this world. The Pharisees, the poor, the cripples, the disabled and the blind, **are they not Jewish?** Shouldn’t they have had some empathy with their own people? Shouldn’t we Christians also have a care for the unbeliever? I do not mean that we share our intimate secrets with them, or cast our pearls before swine, but if we cut ourselves off from them, how will they hear the Gospel? Did Jesus cut Himself off from men? As Jacob Marley said, “Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!” (Charles Dickens).

It’s not just the food you provide, because you can feed people without any interaction with them. It is the company, its the social side of eating, and it’s the fellowship and company that comes with the eating that makes a meal memorable, *Revelation 3:20. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.* The NT Christians loved meeting together and it was no chore, *Act 2:46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of*

heart, *Act 2:47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.* Eating in the kingdom is a unifying thing.

But have we the heart to invite people to our table? Are we hospitable, good hosts, good conversationalists, welcoming the strangers to eat with us? *Heb 13:2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.* Do we want to do this thing or will we willingly put it on the back burner and think of it another time that is the question.

We intellectually isolate ourselves from the teachings that we can do, and from the teachings that we do not do. We have a faith that only goes so far, as the father of the demoniac son said, *Mar 9:24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.* If we want to do what Jesus said but find it difficult, then we should not neglect the issue and sweep it under the carpet. We should go to Him and sincerely ask Him to show us how to do these things.

The conclusion is, *Luk 14:14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: **for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.*** All the good things that we think that we do are not without reward.

Whatever we do, we are being paid for, by the Lord, on the last day. He is not a debtor to us, *Pro 19:17 He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.*

It may seem insignificant to us, but care for the poor was one of the clearly observable duties of the believer, *Pro 11:24 Sometimes you can become rich by being generous or poor by being greedy. Pro 11:25 Generosity will be rewarded: Give a cup of water, and you will receive a cup of water in return. CEV..... Pro 28:27 Giving to the poor will keep you from poverty, but if you close your eyes to their needs, everyone will curse you. CEV.....Psa 112:9 He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour. Psa 112:10 The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish.*

This leads in to another topic, “the meal with Christ in the Kingdom of God”, *Luk 14:15 And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.* Will you be at God’s table if you never had the poor at yours?

129. Feasting in The Kingdom *Luke 14: 15 - 24*

Luk 14:15 And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Luk 14:16 Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: Luk 14:17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. Luk 14:18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. Luk 14:19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. Luk 14:20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. Luk 14:21 So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. Luk 14:22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. Luk 14:23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. Luk 14:24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

This follows on from Jesus' conversations at the Pharisees dinner, when He moves the subject along from their attitude to having people to eat with **them**, to God's attitude to having people to eat with **Him**. The people that the Pharisees did not welcome to their feast, "*the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind*" are the very one's God invites to His feast.

The remark, "*Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God*" made by one of the guests, continues the discourse in a new direction. Jesus tells them a story about a great supper that a certain man made, and how this man invited his guests, and how they all began to excuse themselves. He didn't disclose the reason for the supper, except that it was very important to the man who made the feast.

He was expecting those he had taken the trouble to invite, to turn up for the supper but they make excuses not to come. The man, in his anger, sends his servant out to compel people to come in, "*poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind*", but we are left wondering why he didn't invite this group first, along with all of his other guests.

Perhaps it was to provide a connection with the previous exhortation to invite the un-invitable guests to the meal. The ones who did not want to come were just left out, but the "*poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind*", they came and many others too. I suppose the first group, who refused to come, were well fed and did not really need a meal, but the others were hungry and they came.

The servant went out to tell the guests that the meal was ready and we assume that they were given an invitation first, *“And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready”*. These people didn’t refuse the earlier invitation which they had received but they did find something else to do when the time came to go to the supper.

In a similar story in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus tells of a Marriage feast where the servants go to call those invited, *Mat 22:2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, Mat 22:3 And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Mat 22:4 Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. Mat 22:5 But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: Mat 22:6 And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. Mat 22:7 But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Mat 22:8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.*

The people in Matthew are a bit more violent and it ends in the destruction of them and their city. The people in Luke just make their excuses and go off to their various self-appointed tasks, *“The first said unto him, I have bought a **piece of ground**, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought **five yoke of oxen**, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have **married a wife**, and therefore I cannot come.”* They seem good reasons not to go to the supper, but that depends on how important your view of that supper was and what your priorities are. It was important to the man who made it, and it was late in the day when the people cancelled their invitation.

But look, these were the very reasons that a man was excused from war in Israel, why weren’t they good enough reasons to be excused this supper? *Deu 20:5 And the officers shall speak unto the people, saying, What man is there that hath built a **new house**, and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it. Deu 20:6 And what man is he that hath **planted a vineyard**, and hath not yet eaten of it? let him also go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eat of it. Deu 20:7 And what man is there that hath **betrothed a wife**, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her. Deu 20:8 And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart.*

They were good enough reasons for not going to battle in Israel, but as our Lord says, they are not excuses to avoid service in the Kingdom of God, as Jesus goes on to show, if you are not committed entirely, you are not committed at all. The difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament is here shown, in the hard hearts that need this world's kingdom of man, and the attitude of abandonment for those who want the Kingdom of God.

I think the supper that the "certain" man made in Luke's Gospel was identical to the feast held in Matthew's Gospel. It was typical of the marriage feast of Christ. The Pharisees had already mentioned this, *Luk 14:15 And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.* In our story, we must not think that the supper was an ordinary event, it was not, and to turn down the invitation was a great mistake, and so the refusal to attend would have lasting consequences.

The marriage feast of Christ is the final unifying event between Christ and His people in eternity. Christians might think that they would not refuse an invitation to attend the feast, but if you push them a bit and say, "Well, OK, are you ready to go this instant", they will also make reasons that they should have a little bit more time to do things which are important to them. This is, I think, a test of commitment to Christ, and if a person is not prepared to go and be with Christ willingly, immediately, in an instant, he can hardly claim to be "a follower of Christ".

A person that I knew, had unfortunately developed cancer, and I asked him if he was ready to go to the Lord. He was undergoing chemotherapy and the treatment seemed worse than the supposed benefit, but he told me he wanted to be present at the birth of his first grandchild. I wondered at the time, and still consider to wonder, what on earth is more important than meeting Jesus. What could you be doing that is more important, what event or what material substance can be more important than to be with Christ, which Paul says, is far better. Why would you undergo the pain of an incurable disease to stay a little longer in this world? The world will go on without you present, the people you are concerned with will have to make their own choices in life and you have had your time persuading them of Christ, and most of all, although you find it hard to comprehend, you will die.

Such reasons not to go, such as, *"I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come"*, are nothing compared to Christ. I have just bought my first house so I must go and see it, I have bought a new car and I am going for a drive, my new wife is calling me home, are all lame excuses for not going to be with Christ, the new house,

the car, the wife, the yoke of oxen, the parcel of ground are nothing compared to Christ.

How many new things will occur to us in life and become occasions of procrastination, for not going to be with Christ? I think that when we are in Glory we will be thoroughly ashamed that we ever thought this world held any treasure or opportunity, worth spending a moment longer here than necessary. It is all worthless but it is vanity that grasps on to it.

We see what the master of the house thought of this refusal to attend, when he summoned them, he was angry. An anger born for the contempt that the people had for his invitation, an anger because they did not appreciate the kindness and effort that he had put in to creating the supper, an anger that they just did not comprehend what he was doing.

Now we must not forget this was said to the Jews, it is a Jewish audience and I think that Jesus is telling the Jews that they, the Jews, particularly the Pharisees, were like these people who found excuses not to come to God's supper. They were far too interested in the religion that they had made, to give it up for the kingdom of God.

The Pharisees are typical of the religion of all mankind, and typical of manmade, man manufactured religion. It is religion without the Spirit of God, without any soul. It looks good on the outside but inside it is rotten. Just look around the churches and you will see what I mean. Lots of religion, but doing those things that the people want to do and not doing the other things that are said by the Lord of that church, that they should be doing.

The "Pharisees" seem to me to be like the religious people who have advanced somewhat from being "disciples". When we come to Christ we become disciples, but this doesn't last too long, because we very soon "know it all" and don't have to bother with "discipling" anymore, because we have moved on to higher things. Soon after leaving the nursery of discipleship we look around for something else to prop us up, something religious, perhaps a Baptist, or an Anglican denomination, and in that faction, we start to invent teaching or go and adopt their teachings, which Christ never gave us. Very soon we are "Pharisees", yes, we are Christian Pharisees, but Pharisees none the less. We gave up learning about Christ, we stopped being perpetual disciples, and we became Pharisees.

These religious men, these Pharisees, are the very people, the people that turned down the opportunity of going to the supper. They had better fish to fry, better things to do than come to the marriage feast of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. They were happy as they were but in the grand scheme of things, they would pay for their arrogance.

The master of the feast sends his men out to get, *“the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind”* to come instead of those religious men. This is the same group of people that we see Jesus healing, *Mat 15:30 And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them:* They are the same people that the Pharisees failed to invite to their feasts.

Who are these *“the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind”*? In the first address to the Pharisees, about inviting them to a meal, I think that this group are the “literal” poor, dumb, disabled and blind. They are the Jews who are the disadvantaged in Israel. The group that we are dealing with here, in this parable, are a bit more difficult to define. Taken from the perspective of the day on which it is spoken, it is all the Jews other than the “Pharisees”. Extending the message forward into our time, the time of the New Testament, it is the people who “hunger and thirst after righteousness” as opposed to the religious people, who we might call “christians” but they are only nominal believers. I think that in many ways, the Pharisees have been replaced with the “neo-christians” of our day.

How might we know them? Just look for the traits of the Pharisee.

- He does not want Jesus who is a thorn in his side. He is interested in Him but only to argue with Him.
- He loved to tempt, accuse and oppose Jesus.
- He asked for a sign to believe when many were already given. If given yet another sign they would not believe.
- He throws aside God’s commandments and makes the commandments of men and traditions, his doctrines.
- He is more concerned with outer ritual purity, than with the purity of the heart. Jesus said that they cleaned the outside of the cup but inside their hearts were full of wickedness!
- He tithed herbs but more important matters like justice and the love for God were overlooked. They strained out a gnat but they swallowed a camel.
- He loves being seen, the best seats and public greetings in the market because they were proud and ignorant. He made an ostentatious approach to his dress.
- He made people stumble. Jesus said that they were like hidden graves that made unsuspecting people fall in.
- He did not want people to be healed on the Sabbath that God made for man but yet they would take out their ox if it fell in a pit on Sabbath.
- He burdened people with unnecessary traditions and did not raise a finger to help.
- He built the sepulchres of the prophets that their own ancestors killed. Eventually they killed Jesus.

- He took away the key of knowledge. They blocked people from getting into heaven and they themselves did not get in.
- He devoured widows' houses. Instead of looking after the poor he exploited them.
- He said long prayers pretending that he was righteous and would be heard.
- He compassed land and sea to convert people and they made those converts twice a child of hell as he was.
- He forbade people from swearing by the gold of the temple but they swore by the temple itself.
- He talked a lot but did not do anything. They even praised God with their lips and their heart was far from Him.
- He was a fool, a blind guide and hypocrite. John the Baptist called them vipers.

The Jews who were given the opportunity of salvation, refused it in every generation, except for the remnant. I think that the words we have seen before in Luke, are appropriate to this sections conclusions, *Luk 13:34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Luk 13:35 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.....Luk 14:24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.*

130. The Price of Discipleship Luke 14: 25 - 27

Luk 14:25 And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, Luk 14:26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Luk 14:27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

*Luk 14:25 And there went **great multitudes** with him: and **he turned**, and said unto them.* Jesus goes on His way, trailing the multitude, and turns as He walks, to tell them something that occurs to Him. It seems that the multitude were discussing discipleship, the reasons why some people get in to the kingdom and some people do not, and the conversation had spilled out onto the highway, and so Jesus clarifies what is required. At first hearing it is very harsh and to become a disciple we must get our minds around a difficult concept, *Luk 14:26 If any*

man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

That must have gone down very poorly with some of the people, since the saying of the law is quite plain and we should not hate our parents but respect them, *Exo 20:12 Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.* So why is Jesus saying I must hate my father? And what about your wife, the bride of your youth, did not He which made them in the beginning say, *Gen 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they **shall be one flesh**.* No man ever hated his own flesh.

Some say that “hate”, μισέω, which some have interpreted to “love less” is the correct translation. But that is saying that “to love” means to “hate less”, and that is just stupid. It is the complete contrast between the words which make the point so well, polar opposites, contrasting the states, and not “hating less” is as if it were only a bit lower than love. And if we adopt this view, we lose the whole meaning, for example in, *Luk 16:13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.* It is the contrast in the meaning of the words, and if a comparative like “less” was to be intended, there is a word that could be used, μικρός, but it is not used to supplement “hate”. Hate means hate and no amount of casuistry will get around it.

If I am to love my enemy why am I to hate my father? Does it imply he is not of the faith? *Mat 5:43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt **love** thy neighbour, and **hate** thine enemy. Mat 5:44 But I say unto you, **Love your enemies**, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;* No, it does not mean he is not of the faith, an unbeliever, and that certainly does not mean you hate them less, no you love them completely, even if they do not love you.

This is a difficult scripture to work out, until you come to that part of the verse which says, “and **his own life** also, he **cannot be my disciple**”. **YOU** are in the list of people to hate, “*hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life*” and this says that **YOU** have to hate yourself, hate your own life or put another way, not to love yourself. How much do I love myself? *Joh 12:25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that **hateth his life in this world** shall keep it unto life eternal.* Turning the thought away from your parents, siblings and wider family, **YOU** are confronted by self, and from other side of the argument **YOU** have to ask yourself why should I hate myself?

If I cling to life in desperation, I am told in no uncertain terms that I shall lose it. I have to evaluate my life in terms of how the things which I like, the things which

I love, are stopping me from having eternal life. I make the comparison even clearer, how much are the things that I love, working contrary to Christ and by that, showing my lack of love, *Joh 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

The more we look into this subject we see how worthless we are. As Philip Bliss wrote,

Guilty, vile, and helpless, we,
Spotless Lamb of God was He;
Full redemption—can it be?
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

It is a strange thing, but we form deep attachments to parents and families, our own, I mean. Why is this? I find myself more emotionally involved with the things which affect my own family, particularly if a death occurs, and view other family's troubles and losses differently, more dispassionately. They do not seem as important as my family.

I perhaps appreciate what my parents did for me, much more as I grow older and am not able to thank them because death has intervened. I think back to my childhood, and my parents looking after me, holding my hand when out walking, being a comfort to me in my childish nightmares, providing for my needs, giving me presents and most of all for being there, a presence I could rely on. But I did not appreciate it then.

All these things add up to why we have an emotional attachment to our families and I think that we have this memory to remind us that we are spiritual beings and on a journey to heaven. With some people it is a really hard thing to let go of the ones you love, and we mourn and weep for them. We forget the love of God with which they are now forever wrapped in, the better place that they have gone to, the world that we prayed for but never believed in, when we said, "*Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.*" We are still clinging on to life by the finger nails and we go to extremes to prolong it for a few seconds, not believing Paul when he said, *Php 1:21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

And I do not see that Christ disparages the things that our parents did for us, or disparages our parents and he certainly does not say our religious obligations to parents are made null and void by what He says. Our wives and husbands are not to be cast aside, our marriage vows broken, or that we should see what Jesus says as an excuse to divorce them. When He says "hate" them, He doesn't mean you can throw off all your responsibilities to them. He does not say we should cut ourselves off from them and have nothing whatsoever to do with them.

Jesus does say that for discipleship, you need to "hate" yourself and them and love the Lord your God, *Deu 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one*

LORD: Deu 6:5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

We are moving from being earthly people, with earthly families to a heavenly people with God as the heavenly Father, forsaking all that this world possesses. Parents have us for such a short time, but this is to teach them and us a lesson, a very important lesson. Our parents had us and nurtured us so that eventually, we would be severed from them and presented to God. This is nowhere better seen than in the life of Abraham, who offered up his son to the Lord, *Gen 22:10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. Gen 22:11 And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. Gen 22:12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.*

To which the Epistle of the Hebrews adds, *Heb 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Heb 11:18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Heb 11:19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.* Abraham had so much confidence in the Lord, so much faith, that it did not matter if he killed Isaac, God would in any case raise him from the dead again, and He was just testing Abraham.

The parent has the duty of bringing the child up for the sole purpose of serving the Lord. When that is done, their purpose is complete. It is shown to us in nature, in the spawning of Salmon and how the parents die after this is complete. They live to give their children life, like the ephemeral May fly, living to procreate and die.

We get a glimpse of what Jesus is getting at in the verse which says you are to “hate” all earthly ties to relatives. We are not made for this earth but made for heaven and eternity, in the presence of our true Father. This life isn’t the end but the beginning, and if we truly know it, we shall hate it, hate the very fact that we are contained in it and constrained by it. We move from hate to love in an unbounded attraction to our true Father, the Father of Lights in whom there is no shadow of turning. Our parents have done their task, to the best of their ability, and we thank them and leave them for the greatness of God. Our marriage to our wives taught us the lessons of love and kindness, but that too is to go and we shall be as the angels.

We shall scarce remember this life, when as the hymn says, “When we’ve been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun, We’ve no less days to sing

God's praise, Than when we first begun". This life will be a fading dot in the middle of the screen of this present life.

It is not enough though to hate the things of this life, there is more for you must take up your cross in order to be a disciple, but not go where you want with your cross. You follow Jesus, *Luk 14:27 And whosoever doth not **bear his cross**, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.* What is the cross that I would bear? The cross was an instrument of torture but primarily of death. You do not carry the Cross of Jesus, you carry your own cross.

Do you remember what we said earlier, (Vol. 2. Ch. 70. Take up your cross and follow Me *Luke 9: 23 – 27 qv.*)

But if you take this principle, "**follow Christ**", then you will be constantly reminded of self denial. It is a summary of what we must be like and what we must do. Just as the 10 commandments are a summary of the 613 plus case laws arising from the 10 laws. Yet even these 10 laws are summed up in two, *Luk 10:26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? Luk 10:27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. Luk 10:28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.* Now we can sum up the whole law, the 10 Commandments, love God, love neighbour, in one overriding rule of life.....**follow Me.**

It is a daily walk, in which we see many things which are not of Christ, and we find them hard to get rid of, and we find them hard to crucify but we carry the cross as a reminder of death and that these things must die. We carry it with us to the place of crucifixion, ourselves and the lusts of the flesh, which must all die. *Gal 5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts..... 2Co 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.*

That is what self-denial is. It is not giving up something for the sake of temporary physical health, or fitness, like when we say, "I won't have another chocolate fudge brownie, I must deny myself". It is about a whole lifestyle. It is saying that I am nothing, of no importance, I am a worthless piece of garbage, I have no value, except when I follow Jesus.

If I am not prepared to do that thing, to become void of self, so that I can be filled with Jesus, then there is no point in going on with the religious pretence of Christianity. I am just like the poor Pharisees who were religious but not religious toward Jesus. They have their reward, but it is the earthly reward.

As Jesus said before, *Luk 9:23 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. Luk 9:24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. Luk 9:25 For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? Luk 9:26 For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.*

131. The Price of Discipleship pt.2 *Luke 14: 28 - 35*

Luk 14:28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Luk 14:29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Luk 14:30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Luk 14:31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Luk 14:32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. Luk 14:33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Luk 14:34 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? Luk 14:35 It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

What is the cost of discipleship? If salvation in Jesus is free, why come and present me with a bill, why charge me and give me a cost to pay? I thought that when Christ came to save sinners, like me, it was all free, and according to Billy Graham, all I had to do was this,

- Admit your need. (I am a sinner)
- Be willing to turn from your sins. (Repent)
- Believe that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross and rose from the grave.
- Through prayer, invite Jesus Christ to control your life through the Holy Spirit. (Receive him as Lord and Saviour)

The miracle of modern evangelists was mine, by this word and just like that, "Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me", I am saved..... except for the bit the evangelist left out, and which Jesus leaves **IN**, *Luk 14:28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, **sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost**, whether he have sufficient to finish it?*

Do evangelists help you to count the cost? I have never heard one evangelistic sermon on “counting the cost”, but I am sure that there have been some preached. It does put a dampener on evangelistic preaching. The responsibility that I didn’t want, the responsibility that I did not ask for is suddenly thrust back upon me, when all I was thinking about was an easy ride. And I suddenly have two questions to answer, whereas I thought it was only one. The questions are, one, “do you take Christ as your Saviour” and two, “are you prepared to count the cost of doing so”?

That makes coming to Christ a matter of reflection, consideration, and not some instant decision that you have to make by coming forward and “giving your life to Jesus”. The evangelist is pleading for you to come to Jesus quickly, but Jesus is saying, woah, hold your horses, are you sure that you are really prepared to follow me to the end? Do not make such a critical decision instantly, “**sit down first and count the cost**”, see if you are prepared to finish what you have started, before you say, “I will follow you”.

Nobody told me that was necessary when I came to the Lord. The pressure was put upon me to make a profession of faith and that was it. I was saved, despite Christ saying to the contrary, “count the cost”. The only advice, if it was advice, was to go to “church”, as it happens, the local Anglican church, where the Rector was clearly not saved. His view was that, “all in the church are saved”, probably a nod to infant christening and so like many I wandered to and fro, trying to find out what was what.

This is where I must count the cost of discipleship. I must think it through, I must weigh up the pro’s and con’s of a life lived for Christ. I must examine my own heart and see if it really is committed to Him, 100 per cent, or if I like the idea of having him in my life, but not all the time. I like a little bit of “me” time, time to do the things I want to do, time to indulge in my wishes, wants and fantasies. I want to go off without Him and have fun in the world while I am here, surely I can do that can’t I?

I used to think that I could do what I wanted and have Christ too, “All this and heaven too”. I thought that quote by Matthew Henry was referring to the pleasures of this life, as well as the pleasures of heaven, which was not how Matthew intended it. He was commenting on Psalm 23,

Here is a prospect of the perfection of bliss in the future state. So some take the latter clause: “Goodness and mercy having followed me all the days of my life on this earth, when that is ended I shall remove to a better world, to *dwell in the house of the Lord for ever*, in our Father’s house above, where there are many mansions. *With what I have I am*

pleased much; with what I hope for I am pleased more." All this, and heaven too! Then we serve a good Master.

"All this" refers not to the world of self-indulgent pleasure, without Christ, because we know that He wouldn't like the things which we do. It refers to the blessings of Christ in this life and the life to come, because, "**we serve a good Master**".

I found this illustration from "Got Questions" helpful,

Suppose you learned that you had been given an all-expense-paid condo on a beach in Tahiti, complete with airfare, a car, food, and a maid. You could brag about your new lifestyle, plan for it, and dream about it. But until you pack up and leave your current home, the new life is never really yours. You cannot live in Tahiti and your current hometown at the same time. Many people approach Christianity the same way. They love the idea of eternal life, escaping hell, and having Jesus at their beck and call. But they are not willing to leave the life they now live. Their desires, lifestyle, and sinful habits are too precious to them. Their lives may exhibit a token change—starting to attend church or giving up a major sin—but they want to retain ownership of everything else. Jesus is speaking in Luke chapter 14 to those with that mindset.

What am I prepared to give up for Christ? Am I prepared to give up my evil ways? *Mar 7:21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Mar 7:22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: Mar 7:23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.....Col 3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: Col 3:6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:*

I heard a story of a man who was by profession a robber, if you can have such a profession. He was converted, or so he said, and began his new life. He kept on with his robbing, as he said, "I am a Christian robber". Like many Christians, he did not see that coming to Christ required any changes in his life.

That man had no sure foundation for his faith. His foundation was built upon what he believed that was taught by men. Jesus says, *Luk 6:47 Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: Luk 6:48 He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded*

upon a rock. Luk 6:49 But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

If you are a person who builds on the foundations that Jesus says, that is “my sayings”, you will want to know all of the sayings not just the sayings that you like, or the sayings that you remember but upon all of the sayings. If some of the ingredients are omitted, the resulting mixture will not be correct and it will fail the test. When I was in my senior year at school, I got a job in the holidays as a general labourer. One of the jobs we had was to relay a floor at the local Brewery. We put the wrong proportions of sand and cement in the mix and duly laid the floor which looked all right when it was finished. A week later we got a complaint from the Brewery that the trolleys they used, were digging up the floor because the mixture was breaking up. The floor had to be relayed again. The foundation was all wrong.

And its not only getting the foundation right when you begin to build, *Luk 14:28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Luk 14:29 **Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Luk 14:30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.*** Will I be able to finish what I have started?

Some of us start so well, but to use the words of the Sower, *Luk 8:13 They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.* Notice that some fell on the rock, which Jesus says we should build upon, but because they just lay upon it and did not drill in to it, they withered. They were not “**able to finish it**”, and they were tempted away.

It is not just necessary to get on the rock, to have a good foundation for faith. It must be built upon, built with a purpose, and built to completion. It is pointless having a house with no doors, no windows, and no roof because that is not a house and somehow you were tempted away from your task of completing the house. We start off so well in our walk with Jesus, but after a time we become distracted, like the church in Ephesus, which had many good points but, *Rev 2:4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*

If we lose focus in what we are doing, think that we have done enough to warrant eternal life and begin to sink back into the world, and consequently do not have the love for Christ that we had at first, then we are miserable men who are fit to be mocked, “*all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish*”. Do you and I love Christ more, or less than

when we were first introduced to Him, ask yourself and see whether you have grown cold?

Jesus brings us back to that commitment, not partial but a total commitment, *Luk 14:33 So likewise, whosoever he be of **you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple***. The sheer impossibility of becoming His disciple if you have not counted the cost and committed all and hated this world is stated in, *1Jn 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 1Jn 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 1Jn 2:17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

So if you want to season this world and go on seasoning it, you have to be careful that you do not lose your power to season it., *Luk 14:34 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? Luk 14:35 It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

I think this is a danger hanging over us older Christians. The older Christian is likely to have mellowed, to have softened his views, and tempered the feelings of youth. He is in great danger of becoming flavourless, neither hot or cold, ambivalent to the great teachings of Christ, not fit in himself except to be thrown on the dunghill.. Some old Christians suffer weariness and as a result do not stand up for the truths of scripture and that is a sad testimony of their wasted time.

To the contrary, old age is the time of “mists and mellow fruitfulness”, a time when the wisdom of the years has come to maturity, when our experiences in Christ have maximised, *Lev 19:32 'At the presence of grey hairs thou dost rise up, and thou hast honoured the presence of an old man, and hast been afraid of thy God; I am Jehovah. YLT. The old are to be the example of the faith not the young, Job 12:12 With the very aged is wisdom, And with length of days understanding.*

I came across this article, “God designed old age on purpose. Really!”

Did you know God deliberately created old age? Such a thought comes as a surprise to many – because everything we hear about being old is negative. Far from old age being recognised as part of the Divine plan, it's wrongly seen as something to be feared, resisted and fought against. For example, the anti-ageing cosmetics industry spends £billions on conveying exactly that message. So I'm never surprised, when speaking on this subject to a large group of Christians, to find

some are not convinced. However the majority, when they see the truth in the Scriptures, see it and are delighted.

We should not be surprised by this failure to see old age being part of God's plan. That's because we know God is opposed by an implacable enemy out to thwart his plan for human kind. And the weapon used to thwart his purpose for older people is 'ageism' – with its hidden, subtle, and powerful messaging that diminishes the sense of self and warps expectations.

Ageism is not a jokey, trivial thing. It seeps into our souls silently, powerfully, and daily – in hundreds of different ways. Blinding us to our value, and leaving thousands feeling they are so worthless their lives are a waste of time. That's why it is important for old age to be seen from God's perspective.

God positively wants us to grow old. When God created the universe, he set in motion times and seasons and the ageing process. When you realise the purpose God has in mind, you see how wonderful growing older is meant to be. God sees old age as a reward and a blessing. Consider these promises:

- 'With a *long life* I will satisfy him and let him see my salvation.' Psalm 91:16,
- '... if you walk in my ways, I will *prolong your life*.' 1 Kings 13:14,
- 'you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a *good old age*.' Genesis 15:15.
- 'Honour your father and your mother, so you may *live long in the land* the LORD your God is giving you.' Exodus 20:12

The peak of the culture of Scriptural times was wisdom, and because it's acquired with experience and age, older people were respected. 'Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days,' (Job 12:12) In contrast, in our culture, the peak of attainment is youth.

If you think about it, the wheat may have the potential to be very fruitful, to yield a huge harvest, but until it is mature and relatively old, it is not harvested. All fruit is picked when it is old, not when it buds, but when it is ripe. So to with the mature believer, he is at his peak, and it is a shame to see those people grow old and useless instead of being sparked up with the best years of their lives. They should improve with age.

Perhaps we build the greatest achievement of our lives when we become an aged person, full of wisdom, like God, *Dan 7:9 I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and*

the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. I said, like, because imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

132. The Lost Sheep *Luke 15: 1 - 7*

Luk 15:1 then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. Luk 15:2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. Luk 15:3 And he spake this parable unto them, saying, Luk 15:4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? Luk 15:5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. Luk 15:6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. Luk 15:7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Jesus is making inroads to the publicans and sinners, all sinners really, and they are around him listening to what He says. We haven't really looked at them as a specific group, like the disciples or the Scribes and Pharisees, so we will turn our attention to them. All of these three groups of people that we are dealing with are Jews not Gentiles, as Jesus says, *Mat 15:24 Jesus said, "I was sent only to the people of Israel! They are like a flock of lost sheep."* CEV.

The people that Jesus dialogued with were the disciples, Jews, and 12 of them were called apostles, those who were sent, the inner group, the first wave of His army. The 70 disciples who were sent out afterwards were also apostles in as much as that is what an apostle means, one who is sent out. They were all called disciples or learners because they closely followed Him and His teachings. Unfortunately they were just as bad as the Pharisees when it came to making judgements, *Luk 9:54 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? Luk 9:55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. Luk 9:56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.* Yes, that's our beloved John the Apostle, saying that.

The Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees and priests were the religious faction, observing the law according to their traditions. Some were more friendly than others, but on the whole they were anti-Christ, and eventually when it was clear they had no answer for Him, and so they banded together and killed Him, *Joh 11:47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called the council together and*

said, "What should we do? This man is working a lot of miracles. Joh 11:48 If we don't stop him now, everyone will put their faith in him. Then the Romans will come and destroy our temple and our nation." Joh 11:49 One of the council members was Caiaphas, who was also high priest that year. He spoke up and said, "You people don't have any sense at all! Joh 11:50 Don't you know it is better for one person to die for the people than for the whole nation to be destroyed?" Joh 11:51 Caiaphas did not say this on his own. As high priest that year, he was prophesying that Jesus would die for the nation. CEV.

Then we come to this group of people who are called "*the publicans and sinners*", or tax collectors and sinners, but not that the rest of men were not sinners. The Pharisees considered them the lowest of the low, the bottom feeders, and even Jesus does the same, *Mat 18:17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him **be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*** They are at the bottom tier of Jewish life but the disciples are learning about life and the Pharisees have arrived and know everything, or so they think.

We read of the tax collectors feast in Luke chapter 5, when Levi, or Matthew as he was known, invited Jesus dinner, *Luk 5:27 And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. Luk 5:28 And he left all, rose up, and followed him. Luk 5:29 And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. Luk 5:30 But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?* I remind you of this, which we covered before,

Fancy getting a tax collector as a Disciple? "Tax collectors were very despised because they collected taxes for Rome, but Jesus saw this as an opportunity to teach that everyone was accepted by Jesus if they believed. During the time of Jesus, Israel was divided into various territories that were governed by the descendants of Herod the Great, but Judea was an Imperial territory governed by a Roman procurator and the taxes were very high there. Wealthy Jews would bid for the position of tax collector and get even richer by adding a substantial fee above whatever was owed. There were also publicans like Matthew who collected taxes for customs or tolls on imports, exports, and merchants who came to buy or sell in Israel. The religious leaders especially despised the tax collectors and they were considered unclean because of their contact with Romans. Their testimonies were rejected in court and they were not redeemable under the Law of Moses. When Jesus made friends with the tax collectors His ministry was immediately under suspect."

This man was among the most despised of Israel, he was hated for his profession, and even today we do not like the people who take our money for some godless purpose. Surely this was a bad choice, one we would not have made. If you want to start a moral crusade surely you are off to a bad start if you choose someone who is not popular. Why not choose a famous gladiator, an academic, an all around “good guy”? But these are the choices of the world and the world will go after its own, but to take a disreputable vessel and fill it with the perfume of God, you have to look at that vessel and wonder what change, what grace has been poured out on it. He is a picture painted by God, warts and all but a sanctified one at that.

Jesus was putting His reputation on the line by associating with tax collectors, but of the three groups, the disciples, the Scribes and Pharisees, and the tax collectors and sinners, the tax collectors were the ones it seems most ready to hear Jesus. They were on Jesus’ radar just as much as the others, but the Pharisees didn’t see this, *Luk 15:2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.* Yes, He even ate with them. God was pleased to accept their invitation to a meal even if the Pharisees were not. Was God as righteous as the Pharisees or was His righteousness different? It was different.

It was different, and the following parables tell them how different the righteousness of God was. They are:

- The parable of the lost sheep
- The parable of the lost coin
- The parable of the prodigal son

There are three parables that talk about things that were “lost and found” and the rejoicing over the lost that was found. The usual way which we treat these parables is to say, isn’t it wonderful that God rejoices over ME and my repentance, because that is what He is getting at in the parables. The lost being found, ME being found when I was lost in the world, and Jesus carried ME home on His shoulders. Me, me, me.

Go back to the context of the parables and you will see it is not about ME at all. The Pharisees had said, *Luk 15:2 **This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.*** The purpose of the parables is to show that Jesus does eat with “sinners” and there is rejoicing over Him by the angels in Heaven, and rejoicing over the sinner, and the Pharisees must learn this, *Luk 15:7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.*

It was so obvious to us once, that Jesus saves the vilest sinner but as we became less vile and more holy, in our own eyes, we forgot the place where we came from, and we “holy people” became Pharisees. We turned to Jesus and said,

“This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them”, because we had forgotten the man who rescued us.

The principle that Jesus was showing them was simple human kindness and concern. The man did not think, because I have still got 99 sheep, the loss of one will not disadvantage me too much, I'll just take it as collateral damage, part of the cost of running a flock. You win some and you lose some. It was right that he went and looked for the sheep in the wilderness, in the desert places. Did not every one of them do the same?

The man who lost the sheep did not say that the sheep was a sinner because it had gone off and become lost. He did not neglect it because it was a lost sheep and didn't stay with the flock. Yes, it was different, wayward and its behaviour singled it out as being different, but it was a sheep after all, albeit a lost sheep. And the man showed the same concern for the lost sheep as he did for the others who did not get lost.

The Pharisees did this very thing, they rescued their lost sheep, so why did they have a different attitude towards lost people? Jesus had already told them that people had a greater value in the sight of God than His creatures, *Luk 12:6 Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? Luk 12:7 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: **ye are of more value** than many sparrows.*

The Pharisees had begun to see themselves as another breed of men. They were not of the same race as other mortals. There were existing in their own little world, sinners and Pharisees, two races, and the two were totally separate. You would think that God had created them apart from the rest. But our Lord does not dismiss the Pharisees, does not call down the wrath of God upon them, does not ignore them but explains to that the last vestige of good in them, nay appeals to their inner heart, to consider what He says. That is not like us it? When we have made our mind up that somebody is bad, they are tarred for life with that brush, but not so Jesus.

The tax gatherers and sinners must have been cheering Jesus, for at last they had a champion, one who could speak against the Pharisees, and one who called them back to the God of Israel.

The Pharisees looked after their sheep and they went after the lost, so what stopped them looking for a man who was lost? The Pharisees rejoiced when they found the sheep and celebrated it with his neighbours, why couldn't they celebrate over a man who was lost and is found? There are three reasons which we shall explore in the next two parables,

- Value
- Love
- Compassion

As Christians we have a duty to God to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, *Jas 1:26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Jas 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and **to keep himself unspotted from the world.*** We try to do this

That serious message extends to brothers who transgress, *1Co 5:9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: 1Co 5:10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. 1Co 5:11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, **if any man that is called a brother** be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.*

Like us Christians, the Pharisees were very careful who they mixed with. They had made it their distinguishing feature, and separation was their duty. = פָּרָשׁ pârâsh come from a root meaning to separate or disperse and they did just that. This is from the “Faith” website,

Many scholars believe the Pharisees were the spiritual descendants of the Hasidim, or Pious Ones. This group was very devoted to Judaic Law. The Hasidim were strict adherents to the Torah, preferring death and torture to even the most minute violation of the Sabbath. (1 Mc 2:42) They also joined the revolt of the Maccabees against the Hellenistic Seleucids in the second century B.C. to preserve their religious freedom and push back against a paganism that was infiltrating Judaism. After the fighting, the Hasidim withdrew from the political scene and, as many historians argue, gradually merged with the Pharisees. The Pharisees eventually became a religious party of laymen and scribes in contrast to the Sadducees, who were high priests.

At the beginning of the movement, the Pharisees were patriots, holding to the Judaism of Moses in an increasingly secular world and this was quite laudable. In the process of time this separation had become more than just holding to the Law of Moses, it had embraced the traditions of the Fathers, non-biblical edicts which held the same if not greater authority than Moses. There is some dispute as the time of origin of these “additions”, with some saying it started as far back as the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. But they do not appear to have been written down until the second century A.D. in a book called the Mishnah, “that which is memorized by wrote. The Mishnah is the **written collection** of the Oral Torah. This collection came about as a result of Roman oppression and occupation which caused the Jewish people to leave the Holy Land around 200 A.D. and was formed due to fear that the Jewish people would lose their unity and beliefs if they were not in the Holy City.

So much for the history. With their traditions, with their attitude to the “sinners”, it is no wonder the Jesus takes them to task. By the way, although they were all Jews, the Pharisees considered that those Jews who did not follow their strict rules were “sinners”. Christians too can be just like them in our attitudes towards the “sinner”. It does not matter in the least that we were wretched sinners, once we have cut off that life and left the ruins of that world, but we seem to have our compassion cut off as well.

I said that we should not go to the excesses of the unbeliever, but that we walk in Christ, *Eph 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.* We are to be separate from the sins of this world, *Eph 5:3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Eph 5:4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. Eph 5:5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

But here is the thing. We are told to be separate, פָּרַשׁ = parash, from sins, but not separate from sinners. Do you get the point? How else will you ever speak to the lost if you adopt the antagonistic practices of the Pharisees?

133. The Lost Coin *Luke 15: 8 - 10*

Luk 15:8 Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? Luk 15:9 And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Luk 15:10 Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

I have said that we were looking at three qualities that **we** Pharisees and Scribes lacked when dealings with men,

- Value
- Love
- Compassion.

I said “we” because we are those people. We talk a good game about saving sinners, care for sinners, but we don’t value them for the Lord’s sake, we don’t really love them, and as for compassion, well not really, because we just about tolerate them. We stand in our gathering places, our synagogues, and lift up our self-righteous eyes to heaven and say, *Luk 18:11 The Pharisee stood over by*

himself and prayed, "God, I thank you that I am not greedy, dishonest, and unfaithful in marriage like other people. And I am really glad that I am not like that tax collector over there. Luk 18:12 I go without eating for two days a week, and I give you one tenth of all I earn." CEV. We are those people, Pharisees.

Jesus expounds these three parables of the lost and found,

- The parable of the lost sheep
- The parable of the lost coin
- The parable of the prodigal son

He does so because He has observed the Pharisees and Scribes murmuring, *Luk 15:2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.* He does so to correct them and to give hope to the "tax collectors and sinners" listening. We suggested that the three parables, although about things that were "apparently" lost, gave us an insight into the character and attitude of the one searching for the lost. It was not so much about the lost object but the character of the one finding the lost.

We also saw in the history of the Pharisees, that they had made a good start, in that originally, they were pious and non-worldly but had developed as a body of people who failed to make a distinction between **SIN** and the **SINNER**. Paul makes this clear in his letter to the Corinthians, *1Co 5:9 In my other letter I told you not to have anything to do with immoral people. 1Co 5:10 But **I wasn't talking about the people of this world.** You would have to leave this world to get away from everyone who is immoral or greedy or who cheats or worships idols. 1Co 5:11 I was talking about your own people who are immoral or greedy or worship idols or curse others or get drunk or cheat. Don't even eat with them! 1Co 5:12 Why should I judge outsiders? Aren't we supposed to judge only church members?* CEV.

Paul says, look, you cannot get away from the world's children, the immoral people, because you would have to die and go to heaven to be away from them. You just cannot escape from them, they are everywhere. But those who profess the faith, they are your business. Sin is all around you and you cannot get away from it, so you have to live with it. But you do not have to live in sin. You live side by side with the sinners but you are not partaking of their sins.

Now I do not think that the Pharisees had grasped this. The Pharisee had thought that in this world you could get away from sin by getting away from the sinners. They were still living in the realm of **contractual defilement**, the idea that touching, say a dead body defiled you. It was called contractual defilement, or ceremonial defilement, the same thing, you contracted it from another person and it prohibited a Jew from approaching the sanctuary and offering sacrifice and forbade human fellowship if they had touched "the unclean thing". It might be

contracted by tending a corpse (which may explain the behaviour of the priest and the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan), by leprosy, or by menstruation, with the implication of being frequently excluded from society. An elaborate system of rules about defilement existed by the time of Jesus, and the Pharisees taught that moral duties had a priority, *Mar 7:2 And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault. Mar 7:3 For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.*

These Pharisees had not seen the true import of the laws of contractual defilement. They had not seen that it was to teach them about spiritual holiness, but they only saw them as of earthly value, but Paul corrects this view, *Col 2:20 You died with Christ. Now the forces of the universe don't have any power over you. Why do you live as if you had to obey such rules as, Col 2:21 "Don't handle this. Don't taste that. Don't touch this." Col 2:22 After these things are used, they are no longer good for anything. So why be bothered with the rules that humans have made up?* CEV. The Pharisees bothered about these laws and that goes some way to explaining why they behaved as they did. They were carnal. *Rom 8:6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Rom 8:7 Because **the carnal mind is enmity against God**: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

This explains why you cannot share a believers meeting with unbelievers, *1Co 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* They just do not understand what is going on because they do not have the mind of Christ. *1Co 2:16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.* The meeting is for the edification of God's people, and you cannot edify anybody who works for the devil.

Well, Jesus has shown that contrary to the Pharisees idea, sinners were of value, and lost sheep were of value and even coins, drachma, were of value. The drachma was one of the world's earliest coins. Its name derives from the Greek verb meaning "to grasp," and its original value was equivalent to that of a handful of arrows. It amounted to half the temple tax, *Mat 17:24 And they having come into Capernaum, those receiving the didrachmas came to Peter and said, Does your teacher not pay the didrachmas?* LITV.

Jesus says of the woman who lost her coin, "if she loses one drachma does she not light a lamp and sweep the house, and look carefully until she finds it?" She is not shoddy in her work of looking for the drachma. She lights the lamp to cast a light upon the glistening coin, she cleans the whole house to make sure that she has looked everywhere and she looks carefully, diligently for the lost drachma. The word diligently is an intensive form, meaning to look "very"

diligently. The woman shines a light, cleans thoroughly and looks with extreme diligence.

I wonder if the holy brigade, the Christians, do their work with half the diligence of that woman? The Bible says, *Col 3:23 Do your work willingly, as though you were serving the Lord himself, and not just your earthly master.* That means that if you are serving somebody, as an employee, as a scientist, as a mechanic, as a hospital worker, as a member of your family, as someone in retail, your customer isn't the person standing in front of you, the old lady, the workman, the person that you would rather not serve, it is **Jesus** standing in front of you. If you would treat any person differently to Jesus, any person, I cannot believe that you are a Christian. You and I should see that we work for the Lord and we value people just as much as the Lord does.

And this is where the extreme diligence of the woman was founded. She could have half heartedly searched, not lit a lamp, not swept out the whole house and not found the drachma. But she didn't and in this respect she was like Jesus who came to find us, *Luk 19:10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.* She launched a search and rescue operation, just as the man did who went after a lost sheep, and they found the object of their desire.

Have you noticed that when we have an emergency disaster appeal, people swing into operation and out of compassion move swiftly to save whoever has been injured? They search diligently among the rubble for all of the people affected by the disaster. And they don't sit down and debate which persons they go after, the merits of the people, if they are Ukrainian or Russian, Turkish or Syrian, whether they were worth saving, but they whole heartedly go after them. They do not think that this person was a criminal, this person was assisting the genocide, that person was an old age pensioner, that person is a child, and so on, doing a moral triage on them, saving who might be worthy. They get everyone, they save all that they can without prejudice, without judgement, and they are just saviours.

Now if we are shown by Christ that we should be equally unbiased in our rescue operation (see 28. Fishing for men. *Luke 5:1 - 3*). It is indiscriminate fishing, by Him who said, "I will make you fishers of men". But what is our hypocritical attitude to saving people? We would, if we were honest, prefer not to go after some sinners, we would sooner see them judged and executed and there are some people who (we think) are just not worth the trouble of saving. We sit back in our high seats as Pharisees and think, "I just haven't got the time for them, I don't like them", *Luk 18:11.....God, I thank you that I'm not like other people! I'm not a robber or a dishonest person. I haven't committed adultery. I'm not even like this tax collector.* GW.

But Jesus does not do this. He does not show favouritism with His Gospel, it is open to all men, yes, it is a narrow gate and few there be that find it, but there is

no discrimination in preaching the Gospel. He goes to the rich and the poor, the criminals and the righteous, the disadvantaged and the advantaged, and He desires that we find life, *Eze 18:23 I don't want wicked people to die.*" declares the Almighty LORD. *"I want them to turn from their evil ways and live.* GW. We could all learn a lesson from this.

Think if you will of the person that you detest the most, that you are severely prejudiced against, the person you would refuse to shake hands with, the person you would avoid having contact with. It is someone who has wronged you, a person who is hardened against you, a person who you detest. Well, that is the person that Jesus wants us to go after and if we cannot do that thing, then we have no right to be called Christian but we certainly deserve to be called Pharisees.

The thing is, we continue to follow in the footsteps of man not in the footsteps of Christ and yet we are sure that this is what He wants from us, but is it? When we follow man's path to salvation, we are following a way that leads to destruction. One of the first things that we do after starting on the road of discipleship, beginning to follow Jesus, is to go off road, and get on a vehicle, some Church denomination, that we think will ease us to our Journeys end. I was reminded of a story I read years ago, "The Celestial Railroad" by Nathaniel Hawthorne, and in case you do not guess, it is a parable of John Bunyan's great work, and this will give you a flavour of the story,

Our coach rattled out of the city, and at a short distance from its outskirts passed over a bridge of elegant construction, but somewhat too slight, as I imagined, to sustain any considerable weight. On both sides lay an extensive quagmire, which could not have been more disagreeable, either to sight or smell, had all the kennels of the earth emptied their pollution there.

"This", remarked Mr. Smooth-it-away, "is the famous Slough of Despond—a disgrace to all the neighbourhood; and the greater that it might so easily be converted into firm ground." "I have understood" said I, "that efforts have been made for that purpose from time immemorial." "Very probable—and what effect could be anticipated from such unsubstantial stuff?" cried Mr. Smooth-it-away. "You observe this convenient bridge. We obtained a sufficient foundation for it by throwing into the Slough some editions of books of morality, volumes of French philosophy and German rationalism, tracts, sermons, and essays of modern clergymen, extracts from Plato, Confucius, and various Hindu sages, together with a few ingenious commentaries upon texts of Scripture; all of which, by some scientific process, have been converted into a mass like granite. The whole bog might be filled up with a similar matter."

It really seemed to me, however, that the bridge vibrated and heaved up and down in a very formidable manner; and in spite of Mr. Smooth-it-away's testimony to the solidity of its foundation, I should be reluctant to cross it in a crowded coach, especially if each passenger were encumbered with as heavy luggage as that gentleman and myself.

Nevertheless, we got over without accident, and soon found ourselves at the station little Wicket Gate, which formerly, as old pilgrims will recollect, stood directly across the highway, and by its inconvenient narrowness, was a great obstruction to the traveller of liberal mind and expansive stomach.

A large number of passengers were already at the station house, awaiting the departure of the train. By the aspect and demeanour of the persons, it was easy to judge that the feelings of the community had undergone a very favourable change, in reference to the celestial pilgrimage. It would have done Bunyan's heart good to see it. Instead of a lonely and ragged man with a huge burden on his back, plodding along sorrowfully on foot while the whole city hooted after him—here were parties of the first gentry and most respectable people in the neighbourhood.

Among the gentlemen were characters of deserved eminence, magistrates, politicians, and men of wealth. In the ladies' section, too, I rejoiced to distinguish some of most elevated circles of the Celestial City. There was much pleasant conversation about the news of the day topics of business, politics, or the lighter matters of amusement; while heart-religion was thrown tastefully into the background. Even an infidel would have heard little or nothing to shock his sensibility.

One great convenience of the new method of going on pilgrimage I must not forget to mention. Our enormous burdens, instead of being carried on our shoulders, as had been the custom of old, were all snugly deposited in the baggage car, and, as I was assured, would be delivered to their respective owners at the journey's end.

You can see that even 150 years ago modernism had invaded the churches and it has worked its way further in the intervening years. Not only do we have to rescue the lost, we have to rescue men from the churches that they thought would take them on to glory. This week that abomination, the “church” of England, in its sad confusion, went further towards implementing “gay marriage”, not that marriage is anything to do with the church. And the people who bathe in the raw sewage of that organisation, but think they must stay for the sake of unity, are among those we must save as well. They are taught by the

church that they are saved, but they are not, and the association of that corrupt body will surely damn them.

134. Making the Prodigal Son *Luke 15: 11 - 14*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14epxvU8XIA>

Luk 15:11 And he said, A certain man had two sons: Luk 15:12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. Luk 15:13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. Luk 15:14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. Luk 15:15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. Luk 15:16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

We come to the third lost item on the Lord's list, having covered the lost sheep and lost coin. The fact that our Lord repeats the story of the "lost and found" three times, should make us heed it all the more. It gives it such emphasis that we should stop and take note. Did the Pharisees take note? Did the disciples take note and do we Christians take note?

I think they did and we would be wrong to write them off as a body. Although we do not hear much about them after the resurrection, never the less, some of the Pharisees believed, and they had a problem which they raised at the Council of Jerusalem, *Act 15:5 But there rose up certain of the sect of **the Pharisees which believed**, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.* They were still holding tight to the laws of Moses and circumcision and they had still not fully seen what Christ did, about 18 years after the crucifixion. This council will remedy that.

The Pharisees still held to circumcision, the rite of passage of all males in Israel (but not females). The covenant sign was written in the flesh, *Gen 17:7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an **everlasting covenant**, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.* It was an everlasting covenant, so the Pharisees were quite right to question this. If everlasting means everlasting, why did the Apostles drop it? The same goes for the Law of Moses, *Isa 24:5 The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, **broken the everlasting covenant.***

The Pharisees were upholding what they considered to be the terms of the everlasting Covenant. They had not seen that it was still everlasting, but that the Covenant was new, and it was not championed by Moses, *2Co 3:3 Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.* It was championed by Christ and it was written upon the heart. The law was now all subsumed into Christ, circumcision was now subsumed into Christ, *Col 2:10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: Col 2:11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:*

The Law of Moses and Circumcision stand forever, but now they are forever in Christ and if you be in Christ, these are yours, *1Co 9:21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) (in-lawed to Christ) that I might gain them that are without law.* Or as The Scriptures 2009 version puts it, *1Co 9:21 to those without Torah, as without Torah - not being without Torah toward Elohim, but under Torah of Messiah - so as to win those who are without Torah.* The Pharisees were correct to bring this point up, and by it cleared up the relationship between the believer and the Law.

And the Pharisees were still being converted after Christ's death and resurrection. Paul was a Pharisee, *Act 23:6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.* He **still** was a Pharisee. And we ought to be cheering for those believing Pharisees, because without them the Church would have been a lesser body. They provide continuity with the Old Testament, because they are still Pharisees, Pharisees of the Old Testament and Pharisees of the New Testament.

Forward to our time and what sort of people are in the churches? Unlike the Pharisees they do not read their Bibles much, and the Old Testament even less. Many people reject the literal nature of the Creation, unlike those noble Pharisees who believed. Who are these people who call themselves Christians but show nothing of Christ? I am going to use a different term to define us because I refuse to use a term, Christian, which is so devalued and has no currency with the New Testament. From now on I am a disciple of Christ, pure and simple and I am no longer a Christian.

To return to our parable, why does the son think that he has a right to a "portion of goods" while his father is alive? The Scripture suggests a will, a last testament, is given after death, *Heb 9:16 In fact, making an agreement of this kind is like writing a will. This is because the one who makes the will must die before it is of any use. Heb 9:17 In other words, a will doesn't go into effect as*

long as the one who made it is still alive. CEV. If you are dealing with an inheritance that usually is given to relatives post mortem.

But the person doesn't have to be dead for the inheritance to pass, *Deu 21:15 If a man has two wives, the one loved, and the other hated; and they have borne him sons, both the loved one and the hated one; and if the first-born son was of her who was hated, Deu 21:16 then it shall be, **in the day that he causes his sons to inherit that which is his**, he is not able to cause to inherit the first-born son of the one loved before the first-born son of the one hated, who is truly the first-born. Deu 21:17 But he shall acknowledge the first-born, the son of the hated one, by giving him a double portion of all that he has; for he is the firstfruit of his strength, the right of the first-born is his.*

If the son is getting an inheritance, it is while the father is still alive, just as the Lord gives us part of our inheritance now, *Mar 10:30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.....Luk 18:29 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, Luk 18:30 Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.*

Before the giving of the Law, property was allocated to people before death, *Gen 31:14 Rachel and Leah said to Jacob: There's nothing left for us to inherit from our father. Gen 31:15 He treats us like foreigners and has even cheated us out of the bride price that should have been ours. Gen 31:16 Now do whatever God tells you to do. Even the property God took from our father and gave to you really belongs to us and our children.* The land of Israel was given to the Israelites as an inheritance, a sort of living will.

So you could inherit before death, it could be his portion of the property or it seems that the son could have earned the money, the wages that he would now spend on sin, *Luk 15:12 And the younger of them said to the father, Father give me that part of the property falling to me. And he divided the living to them. Luk 15:13 And not many days after, gathering up all things, the younger son went away to a distant country. And there he wasted his property, living dissolutely. LITV.*

We don't know exactly what the money was for, but the son took it, and like all fools, he was soon separated from it. He wasted or dissipated his substance, according to our Lord, on excess. He did not use what he had for anyone but himself. He could have taken the money that fell to him, to do some good in the world, to found some institute for the poor, but it never occurred to him to be generous to anyone except "number one", himself. He was blind to those around

him, he didn't think of them and they in return didn't think of him, when he fell on hard times.

Things got worse for him when the famine came, *Luk 15:14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.* The Jews would understand exactly why this was. *Deu 28:15 Israel, today I am giving you the laws and teachings of the LORD your God. And if you don't obey them all, he will put many curses on you. Deu 28:16 Your businesses and farms will fail. Deu 28:17 You won't have enough bread to eat. Deu 28:18 You'll have only a few children, your crops will be small, and your herds of cattle and flocks of sheep and goats won't produce many young. Deu 28:19 The LORD will make you fail in everything you do. Deu 28:20 No matter what you try to accomplish, the LORD will confuse you, and you will feel his anger. You won't last long, and you may even meet with disaster, all because you rejected the LORD.* CEV. Men call it karma, but the Lord calls it a curse, and this man was cursed.

The older son, for whatever reason, tells the father that he spent his money on prostitutes, *Luk 15:30 But then this son of yours comes home after wasting your money on prostitutes, and you kill the best calf for him!*' ERV. The son was addicted to prostitutes or as we might say "porn", πόρνη = pornē. I say addicted because he dissipated his substance on it. He did it until the money ran out.

According to medical journals,

Most research into addiction suggests that it activates regions in the brain associated with motivation and reward. Specifically, addiction alters the body's dopamine system. When a person with addiction initially uses the substance or engages in the behaviour, they receive an intense rush of dopamine, causing feelings of pleasure and reward. Over time, their body may produce less dopamine and rely on the substance or behaviour to feel the dopamine rush. Sex can be a highly rewarding behaviour, in terms of dopamine. Using pornography may also activate the dopamine system, potentially leading to addiction. Addiction affects other aspects of the brain as well, steadily changing it, and making it increasingly difficult for the person to avoid the addictive substance or behaviour.

All forms of bad behaviour are reinforced by this process, and you can see why the conscience is not always a good guide, *Heb 10:22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from **an evil conscience**, and our bodies washed with pure water.* The conscience can be plain evil, and no use to us as a mentor for good. And do not think that porn is the only thing we can be addicted to, we can be addicted to gambling, internet, shopping, video games, plastic surgery, binge eating/food addiction, thrill-seeking activities and many other things.

We might say that we have certainly not spent our substance on various pornography, but what have we spent our money on? Are we so unlike this man? We take all that we can get off of our Father and blow the lot on ourselves, with an occasional thought about others to salve our consciences. We spend it on all manner of things without a second thought for the Lord, it's mostly for self. We say thank you to God, grace, for the food we eat, but we seldom consult Him about the food we buy, or anything else that we buy. There's a disconnect between our forms of religion and practice of religion.

This man who spent all that he had on extravagant living, is not an isolated example of a man going astray, he is everyman, you and me, disciples who need to get our heads and hearts fixed by the Lord. And if you say, I haven't done this, you can go and sit on the naughty step with the Pharisees, whose claim to fame is covetousness, *Luk 16:14 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.* When you see that you're just like the rest of us, fallen and sinful, you will see we are getting somewhere.

The Lord expects us to be kind to others, to all men, and that is the mark of a disciple. *Php 2:4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.....1Jn 3:17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? 1Jn 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth..... 1Ti 5:8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel..... Gal 6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. Gal 6:10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.....Pro 21:13 Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.*

Jesus Himself emphasises this very point, *Mat 25:37 Then the ones who pleased the Lord will ask, "When did we give you something to eat or drink? Mat 25:38 When did we welcome you as a stranger or give you clothes to wear Mat 25:39 or visit you while you were sick or in jail?" Mat 25:40 The king will answer, "Whenever you did it for any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you did it for me."* CEV.

135. Coming Round Luke 15: 17- 19

Luk 15:17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! Luk 15:18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have

sinned against heaven, and before thee, Luk 15:19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

Having blown all his cash on prostitutes and been reduced to keeping pigs, he cannot get much lower, and is ready to sit down and consider his situation. He would not of course spend time considering his condition while all was going well and there was cash in his pocket, and his home and his dear old dad were a distant memory to him, but, *Luk 15:16 No one in the country would give him any food, and he was so hungry that he would have eaten what the pigs were eating.* GW.

He was in freefall with no net to catch him. I know in part what he went through. When as a youth, I was living with my parents I had no worries and no responsibilities, or none that I owned. You may say it was up to my parents to teach me that, and maybe they did not know how to, but it was my responsibility too and I should have learned how well off I was. The prodigal son in the parable took his portion and left home, and he thought he could do just as well on his own. It was slightly different for me, in that my home left me when my father changed jobs. I was up the creek without a paddle.

I had some decisions to make, such as whether I could have a meal or whether I could stay the night in a “pub”. Suddenly I had choices, but choices to have one thing or the other thing, but not both things. I was reduced to spending those summer weekends on the beach, underneath an old boat, because I couldn’t afford to pay for more than five nights in bed and breakfast. It was while peeking out under the stars, wondering why I was here, in the cold nights of the summer, that a process started, and I was galvanised to think I ought to do something with my life.

I would like to relate to you that I had an epiphany and was found by Christ, but unfortunately, I continued in sin, only in a better direction or so I thought. It was to be a few years time until I was found. And found I was, for although we like to think that we found Jesus, and we looked to Him and were saved, the whole process started in Heaven, and the reality is that He found us. In the three stories about lost and found, the sheep is too stupid to know he is lost, the coin doesn’t know it is lost and the prodigal is out of his mind but knows he is lost.

When we get like this, we are warned that we are under judgement, and Hannah’s prayer shows us what will happen, *1Sa 2:7 Our LORD, you are the one who makes us rich or poor. You put some in high positions and bring disgrace on others. 1Sa 2:8 You lift the poor and homeless out of the garbage dump and give them places of honour in royal palaces. You set the world on foundations, and they belong to you. 1Sa 2:9 You protect your loyal people, but everyone who is evil will die in darkness. We cannot win a victory by our own strength.* CEV. It is

at this stage, however righteous or holy you think you are that you must see that it is time for some serious self-examination.

For a sentient being, it is strange to think that you might not be the person that you think you are. You may, according to the shrinks and their Bible, the DSM5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition), have many things wrong with your mind, Paranoid personality disorder, Schizoid personality disorder, Schizotypal personality disorder, Antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) , Borderline personality disorder (BPD) and so on.

Well, it says of that young man in our story, *Luk 15:17 Finally, he came to **his senses*** CEV. We read that quickly, and that is probably quickly passed over by us as being irrelevant, but we should pause and think about it. Wait a minute, the man was not in “his right mind” when he went out and spent his inheritance on prostitutes. Paul did the same thing because he wasn’t normal either, *1Ti 1:13 I used to say terrible and insulting things about him, and I was cruel. But he had mercy on me because I didn't know what I was doing, and I had not yet put my faith in him.* CEV.

For there to be “a right mind”, there must be a moral absolute, a standard. I expect you thought that you were pretty normal and everyone around you was a bit different, not quite right. I expect you would have been shocked to have been told that you were abnormal. But look here, everyone is abnormal, *Rom 3:23 for all alike have sinned, and all consciously come short of the glory of God*, Weymouth. Not to put too fine a point on it, we are all mad, not in our right mind, until Jesus comes along and finds us. We are like Nebuchadnezzar, beasts without Christ, not even logical with regard to reason, and why is so obvious. *1Co 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 1Co 2:15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. 1Co 2:16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.*

A right mind is defined according to God’s word, not according to the brain doctors or the DSM5 “bible manual”. What is the right mind, and what is it like to have a right mind as opposed to a wayward, wrong mind? *Php 2:5 Let this **mind** be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:* I believe that when God created man in the beginning, He gave him the ability to reason, and He made him in His image with a mind that was built upon His own mind, *Gen 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.* Adam had the mind of Christ, but that was turned by satan and the world of his reason became distorted.

The world view in which man was created, was not the world view that he now holds, it became a distorted view, and with it came the loss of the mind of God.

Man became a deformed and warped counterfeit of God. We do not need the correction and treatment listed in the DSM5 Bible, we need Christ, *Luk 8:35 The people went out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they also found the man. The demons had gone out of him, and he was sitting there at the feet of Jesus. He had clothes on and was **in his right mind**. But the people were terrified.* No wonder they were terrified, for somebody to change like this was a challenge to those people that they in turn might change. The mind can be changed by Christ, as every true disciple will attest and once the process has started it must continue, *Rom 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

With a flash of the illuminating light of Christ in his mind, with a spark of divine light in his darkness, heaven breaks through and the prodigal son has changed directions and now finds himself on the path of righteousness. He sees his true condition, where he was going and he sees the road to life, but there is one thing he must do and that is something all men must do before they return to their home. It is confession of the wrong done, *Luk 15:18 I will arise and go to my father, **and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee**, Luk 15:19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.*

He sees what he is like before God and he sees himself for the first time. Up to this moment, he only saw himself through his own eyes, but this is the horror dawning upon him, and he is about to cry, *Rom 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Now what is he going to do about it? In the case of the lost sheep, the shepherd does the work. In the case of the lost drachma the woman does the work of finding the coin. But in the prodigal son, the lost boy, the father does not go and find the boy, although he is watching for his return. It is the prodigal who returns to his father, not his father going out and finding him.

In any and every tale of redemption, the person must first come to his senses, and he will confess his sin, and, “*will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee*”. He hadn’t just committed a crime against his father, and we see by this that his leaving home was a sin, he had sinned against heaven.

Let us first look at the sin against heaven. We do not think of this as it affects us but it does, and it is the work of satan to undermine the authority of God, *Mat 4:9 And saith unto him, **All these things will I give thee**, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Mat 4:10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* That is all that it would take to gain the whole world and in the process,

lose our souls. That is all it would take to give satan a victory and heaven a defeat.

It matters not that the devil has empty promises, and he will not keep his part of the bargain much longer than the time it takes for us to make it. We have shamed heaven and every time we lose a battle, heaven is diminished. From Adam's sin, when he caused mankind to fall, he was cast out of paradise or the garden of God, *Eze 28:12 Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Eze 28:13 **Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God**; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.*

I think that Eden was a type of heaven if not heaven itself, *Gen 2:15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.* The translation into the Greek, the LXX, says he was "placed in paradise to work it and guard it", *Rev 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.* The same word is used by Jesus, to tell the repentant thief he is going to be there too. *Luk 23:43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.* He was going to be with Jesus in heaven.

And why do I favour the Septuagint, the Greek version over the Hebrew? The oldest complete MSS of the Hebrew Bible is from about the tenth century A.D. We have portions of manuscripts from the years between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D. (the Dead Sea scrolls) but nothing like a whole manuscript. So how do we know that the Old Testament in our Bibles, which are based on the Masoretic texts of the tenth century, are accurate? Copies of the Greek Old Testament are said to be more accurate than the Masoretic texts and it is pointed out that the early Christians used the Septuagint and not the Hebrew manuscripts when quoting scripture from the Old Testament. The saying goes something like this, "If it was good enough for the apostle Paul and Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, then it is good enough for me."

The Jew would have understood all of this and the son could see his failure to live up to his calling, and coming short of the glory of the God of heaven, he owed heaven an apology. He also owed the God of heaven an apology. He could show his remorse for his sins in one way and that was to ask for the lowest place in his father's house. *Luk 15:19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.*

But saying “sorry” is not really reconciling yourself to God. Its easy to say sorry but that does not satisfy justice, it does not restore the individual to fellowship. A sacrifice is needed, and I think that it was this one the Jew chose, *Lev 4:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Lev 4:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a soul shall sin through ignorance against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which ought not to be done, and shall do against any of them: Lev 4:3 If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people; then let him bring for his sin, which he hath sinned, a young bullock without blemish unto the LORD for a sin offering. Lev 4:4 And he shall bring the bullock unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD; and shall lay his hand upon the bullock's head, and kill the bullock before the LORD.*

I think the young man sinned in ignorance because he was not in his right mind and this would have been the sacrifice that he would have made. He would have to make a sacrifice, the Jews hearing this story would have expected it. And there is an offering in this story, *Luk 15:23 And bring hither **the fatted calf**, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:* and it's the same word in the LXX, Μόσχος = moschos, *Lev 4:4 And he shall bring **the bullock** unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD.*

His remorse takes him even farther, because he says, *Luk 15:19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.* He feels it so keenly that he is prepared to give up the honour of being a son and take the place of a hireling just to be back in his home.

136. Coming Home Luke 15: 20 - 22

Luk 15:20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. Luk 15:21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. Luk 15:22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

The lost son has made the first step back to his father and you will note that the father, although he was looking out for his son, never went and looked for his son. The father was wise in that he knew if he had brought him back, he would have transferred the problem from the city he was staying in to his own house. The only change he would have made is in the geographic location of his son, not in the heart of his son, and that was what he was looking for. He could see that with no change in the boy, he would have come home and used his up father's money to fuel his addiction to sin and he would not “have come to his senses”. He would have died in his sin.

When people attempt to help others, and they should, it must be with care that they are not taken for fools, but act sensibly. It says, *Mat 10:16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.* We are sometimes as wise as doves and harmless as serpents, in the way we deal with our fellow beings. Do we weigh up what is required or do we give out of pure emotion or sentiment?

We should make a very sharp distinction in what we are dealing with and what is the nature of the problem. We should distinguish between the needy poor and the lazy poor, or the poor who are not prepared to give up their luxuries for food, the person who can work but refuses to work, the person perhaps an old widow who cannot earn and people who will take charity because it is there, and those who have made poverty a lifestyle choice but expect you to support them. The believer is as wise as a dove in some of his charitable dealings and is consequently a mug who is mugged. God only deals with the poor who are hungry and homeless, not with the welfare grabbers. The mother who keeps her lip fillers, her iphone, her subscription TV channels instead of feeding her children, and is happy to go to the food bank, is taking you for a fool, and if you cannot see what some people are doing you deserve to be mugged.

The Christian view is this, *2Th 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. 2Th 3:11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.* If you do not believe that, and you think differently, then you are rewriting scripture and you are plain wrong.

The rules are very simple, you help the needy and the needy have an obligation to work for the giver if he can, *Pro 22:7 The rich rules over the poor, and **the borrower is servant to a man who lends.*** You give help locally, not necessarily globally and you take responsibility for the poor, helping him to get out of his poverty, *Lev 25:35 "If an Israelite becomes poor and cannot support himself, help him. He must live with you as a stranger without a permanent home. Lev 25:36 Don't collect interest or make any profit from him. Fear your God by respecting other Israelites' lives. Lev 25:37 Never collect any kind of interest on your money or on the food you give them. Lev 25:38 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt to give you Canaan and to be your God. Lev 25:39 "If an Israelite becomes poor and sells himself to you, don't work him like a slave. Lev 25:40 He will be like a hired worker or a visitor to you. He may work with you until the year of jubilee.*

You could lend to him without interest, but he was duty bound to repay you. It was also the origin of servitude or slavery. If he borrowed from you and was not able to repay, he gave his life over to you until the Jubilee and worked for you.

This is not charity at a distance, it is giving where you live. You may give to a particular cause, for example, the brethren, when they need it, *Act 11:28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Act 11:29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Act 11:30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.* But there is no setting up of food banks for the unbeliever, worldwide aid organisations because that is not what the church is about and we should certainly not get into bed with the unbeliever, who has not got the mind of Christ or the world view of Christ on the issue of poverty.

I am not trying to make you lose your spontaneity in giving, or your compassionate heart, but to direct you to a Biblical way of giving to God. Giving today is big business, and when a “chugger” comes rattling a tin at me, I ask what the CEO of that organisation gets, so that I know how serious the charity is and how many 10’s of thousands of pounds it costs for the management. It is quite ludicrous to take money from pensioners when the managers are raking it in. For example the Age UK CEO gets £190,000 a year, and you should see what the others get. The head of the RSPCA gets £140,000 a year, and they emotionally blackmail you with pictures of thin kittens but spend a huge amount of legal cases! In fact they all play on your tender consciences.

But the father of the prodigal was dealing with a different issue of poverty and he knew his son’s poverty was self-inflicted. It was a poverty due to his son’s selfishness and he was not going to subsidise his son’s selfishness, he was not going to send him more money until he got around to sorting himself out, he wasn’t going to send him food parcels or get him signed up to a food bank. His father was not going to lift a finger to help his wayward son, although it hurt him deeply, because he knew that any form of dependency will only be cured by divine intervention. Jesus healed people from their “demons” instantaneously, *Mat 12:22 Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. Mat 12:23 And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?.....Mat 17:18 And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.....Luk 8:35 Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.*

You say, that is alright for devil possessed people, but this man is not demon possessed. Really, is that what you believe? *Eph 2:1 In the past you were dead because you sinned and fought against God. Eph 2:2 **You followed the ways of this world and obeyed the devil.** He rules the world, and his spirit has power over everyone who doesn't obey God. Eph 2:3 Once we were also ruled by*

the selfish desires of our bodies and minds. We had made God angry, and we were going to be punished like everyone else. CEV. Does that say that only those “possessed” serve the devil or do all men serve satan? It says to the reader, **“You followed the ways of this world and obeyed the devil”**, YOU did just that.

The various institutions that humans erect for the care and cure of mankind do not cure people as Christ does. They only put a bandage on the illness, they say don't blame yourself and proceed to treat the symptoms not the illness. What was the cure for the prodigal, was it some kind of aversion therapy for his addictions? Was it a different drug to reduce his dependency on the problem of porn? Was it some form of mind numbing distraction? No, it is Christ that gives a person the clear mind to reason and think and that is why the prodigal found himself in his right mind. It was at this stage the father could show him compassion rather than pity for the hapless son. It was at this stage the father runs and embraces the son. *Luk 15:20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.*

Then the father does something else, he puts the first or best robe on him (a στολή = stolay), he puts a ring on his finger (δακτύλιος = daktulios), and a pair of sandals on his feet, *Luk 15:22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet* (ὑπόδημα = hupodēma). Why does Luke go into such detail and be so specific about what items the father gives the son? Why not just say his father gave him some new clothes?

You may have seen part of the prodigal's clothing before in scripture, for it was given when Joseph attained his position of chief steward to Pharaoh, *Gen 41:40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. Gen 41:41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. Gen 41:42 **And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; Gen 41:43 And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.***

The words for ring and robe are exactly the same in the LXX as in Luke's Gospel. Only the chain of office is different, although the sandals (ὑπόδημα = hupodēma) may have signified the same thing, the office or the lordship over the property. Let me explain.

There was a ritual in Israel if a man would not take his brother's widow to wife, *Deu 25:7 And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's*

wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. Deu 25:8 Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; Deu 25:9 Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. Deu 25:10 And his name shall be called in Israel, **The house of him that hath his shoe loosed.** The loosing of the ὑπόδημα.

We see this done again in the book of Ruth, Rth 4:5 Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. Rth 4:6 And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it. Rth 4:7 Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel. Again, the loosing of the ὑπόδημα.

The sandal symbolised ownership of the land, ownership of the inheritance, for they are the same in Israel. The land was symbolised by the sandal and taking it off was removal of ownership. So stewardship of the land, symbolised by the chain of office in Egypt was equivalent to the sandal in Israel. And you can see that John the Baptist, the greatest prophet of the Old Testament, was not going to redeem Israel. Only Jesus could, Joh 1:27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. John would not remove the ὑπόδημα.

Then the prodigal goes further and says to his father, Luk 15:21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. The son really feels his betrayal of the father and the whole of heaven and full of remorse confesses to his father.

This is a story about “finding the lost” but God does not invent stories that are lies. He shows us the Father in heaven, behaves like this father and receives the lost son, whoever he be, with rejoicing, and elevates him to the high position in His presence. That plainly put, is you and me, not simply forgiven, but restored to a place in His household, 2Co 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, 2Co 6:18 And will be a Father unto you, and **ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.**

Much more than that, He has elevated us to the level of Melchizedek, Rev 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of

*the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, Rev 1:6 And hath **made us kings and priests unto God and his Father**; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

We are like Joseph, restored and elevated to high office, taken from his cruel brothers, the sons of Israel, Pharisees whose behaviour condemned him, and placed in Pharaoh's palace. And what do we do and say to the Lord Almighty? We say next to nothing. We are hardly grateful that we have been found, let alone for the status to which we have been elevated. We are selfish ingrates of the first order.

137. The Ungrateful Son *Luke 15: 23 - 32*

Luk 15:23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: Luk 15:24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Luk 15:25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. Luk 15:26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. Luk 15:27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. Luk 15:28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. Luk 15:29 And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: Luk 15:30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. Luk 15:31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. Luk 15:32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

Although this section appears to be looking at an ungrateful son, it depends upon how you view this story. We Gentiles approach this as part of the "New Testament" (but it is really the Old Testament) and we forget that when this was spoken the first time, the Old Testament was still in full vigour. We forget that this crowd of people was predominantly Jewish and that this was being spoken to Jews. We forget that they, as Jews, had little inkling of the Gentiles sharing a kingdom with them, and the words of Simeon, about the Gentiles, was not known to them, and the words, *Luk 2:32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel*, was spoken prophetically to Jesus' parents only, and revealed eventually in Luke's Gospel, after Jesus' death and resurrection, some 20 or so years later. They also did not appreciate that the Messiah had to die and be raised from the dead. Our thinking must take these things into account.

If the Jews had heard openly about the Gentiles sharing the grace of God, I think that would have been an abrupt end of Jesus ministry, since the Jew was rightly suspicious of the heathen. It would have looked like a downgrade of Jesus ministry, a compromise. We believers are extremely suspicious of anybody changing the status quo of what we believe and it would have involved a diligent searching of the scriptures to prove it. That was not easy for most of the Jews who did not possess their own Bible and had limited access to the scrolls. It was generally left to the “experts” who had taken over this aspect of religion, and they were the Scribes and Pharisees.

Do we think that the Jews are so stupid that they need three parables, all saying exactly the same thing about being lost and found, to get the message across or are we seeing three different types of “lost and found”? The lost sheep is a story in which we see the good shepherd Christ, rejoicing over finding a lost sheep. It is not necessarily an unsaved sheep, but one that has lost its way, and the shepherd cares for it as much as He does the other sheep. The Parables are not about the **“lost and saved”** but about the **“lost and found”**

It may have drawn them back to consider the 23rd Psalm, *Psa 23:1 A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. Psa 23:2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. Psa 23:3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Psa 23:4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.* Notice that word in verse 3, “restoreth my soul” = **נפשי ישובב** which says, “he rescues and retrieves my soul”. That is what the shepherd is doing.

This leads us to think, “Can parables have more than one interpretation”? I think that there is no reason at all why not. A Parable is designed by God to give the true meaning of an illustration to believers only, *Mat 13:13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. Mat 13:14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:* That meaning may consist of many truths, and that shows the ingenuity of God.

The next parable is about a woman and a lost drachma. “My Jewish Carpenter” website suggests:

It is a Jewish custom for a woman to possess 10 Silver/Gold coins which will be presented by the Bride groom on the day of their engagement (those coins may contain the Groom’s family name or some symbol relating to their family). From that day till the day of marriage, she has to take the coins and polish them, which means she is thinking of the

groom and so on the day of marriage those coins are displayed on their ornaments, either on their head or as a chain. So! The more those coins shine, the more she has thought of the groom. If those coins don't shine, then that will reflect that girl's character. Now if she has lost one of the coins!! Her Marriage could even stop! The groom can simply assume that she is not responsible nor is she interested on the Groom!

Every day when the bride would go out, she would put on a veil onto which she had sewn the 10 coins. The veil was an indication to the public that she had been bought with a price and was waiting to be married. This dowry represented the whole of the bride price and it was no use being partially complete, it had to be whole, as it represented the whole woman. It is the bride of Christ and the 10 pieces of silver, a type of the bride price, the dowry showing his intent, *Eph 1:14 This Holy Spirit is the guarantee that we will receive our inheritance. We have this guarantee until we are set free to belong to him. God receives praise and glory for this.* The word "earnest", ἀρράβων = arrhabōn means a pledge, part of the purchase money or property given in advance as security for the rest. She is careful not to lose her dowry.

We may also consider this loss as having a bearing on the Law, of which there are 10 commands strung like a silver headband, *Exo 13:9 And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a **memorial between thine eyes**, that the LORD'S law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt.* Losing one commandment is the loss of all the commands, *Jas 2:10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.* So the woman who loses her integrity loses her life, and this woman is diligent to find it. The parables have more than one spiritual meaning and no doubt you will find more.

The third parable is about a man, the prodigal son and his father. So looking at the Parables in a different light, we have as the central characters, the good Shepherd, the good woman and the good father. We might even say, we have the Son, the Spirit and the Father, all working together to get back that which was lost.

The parable is a story about a "lost and found son" and completes the trilogy. We always look at the lost son and not the father, but it is more than a story about lost and found, it is about the Father and his attitude to the son.

We have been looking at the Jews who have been saved, but this story moves us away from the Jews as lost souls that are saved, to consider the lost Gentiles who are brought to salvation, illustrated here in the parable of the prodigal. With the

older son typically the Jewish Nation, and the younger son typical of the Gentiles, it could be a story about the coming Gospel? Despite what I have said about the Jewish reticence to accept the Gentiles, it was written to them, but obscure. It was not in their power to see it until after the resurrection, *Joh 12:14 And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Joh 12:15 Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. Joh 12:16 These **things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified**, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.*

They disciples had to completely change their way of thinking about Judaism, *Luk 19:42 Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.* On the road to Emmaus, they were given the full interpretation of Jesus, but He never gave them it before that time.

The father was delighted to have the younger son back and made a fuss over him, and there was much merriment and music and dancing. Like David, he rejoiced over that which was lost, the Ark of the Covenant, coming home to Jerusalem. And like David the music and dancing was not of a worldly kind and he did not make night clubs to dance in every week.

The elder son hears the noise and wonders what on earth is going on. Why didn't the father tell him and invite him? If the father was going to welcome his long lost son, surely he would have had his loyal son by his side. The elder son is like the Jew who discovers that God is welcoming others to His feast, someone that he thinks has no right to a feast, *Luk 15:29 But he said to his father, "For years I have worked for you like a slave and have always obeyed you. But you have never even given me a little goat, so that I could give a dinner for my friends. Luk 15:30 This other son of yours wasted your money on prostitutes. And now that he has come home, you ordered the best calf to be killed for a feast."*

Yes, the elder son had endured much as the first born. He was a pathfinder, and a ground breaker of the chosen race, and that people had not done at all well. He had worked in the heat of the day and had no more to show for it for all that. He was, we might think, justifiably annoyed with the younger brother coming late to the party, *Mat 20:9 And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. Mat 20:10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. Mat 20:11 And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, Mat 20:12 Saying, **These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us**, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. Mat 20:13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? The elder brother was going to have to learn to share his toys!*

It was a hard regime that the Jew was under. When the Pharisees raised the question as to whether you should circumcise and whether you should do the Law of Moses, in Acts 15, the council of Jerusalem, the consensus was this, *Act 15:10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, **which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?** Act 15:19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: Act 15:20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. Act 15:21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.*

It was bad enough under the regime of the Law and we do not want to live that way in our times and the elder son in the story, had been brought up under the Law, rigid and unyielding. He must learn to accept his brother's return and understand his father's graciousness. It was not as if things had changed for the elder son, he still had a place at the fathers table. He just had to move along the bench and let the returning brother have a seat. That was not asking too much was it?

The father reminded the older son that he was not being deprived and that all that the father had was his, *Luk 15:31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. Luk 15:32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.*

It is a time for rejoicing, a time to see that there are no barriers, divisions or differences between one person and another, *Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Col 3:11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.*

When he got his perspective right, when he saw things as his father did, all was well. We are not told about the subsequent days after the return, how the sons worked together to build the estate of their father but that story is told elsewhere. To the crowds assembled it had given them a lot to think about. These three stories had taught them that all men are worth finding and all men get an equal place in God's kingdom, and we should not think of ourselves more that we are for we are in the end no better than the lost.

We are both sons.

138. The Parable of Mammon Luke 16: 1 - 13

Luk 16:1 And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. Luk 16:2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Luk 16:3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. Luk 16:4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. Luk 16:5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? Luk 16:6 And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Luk 16:7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.

Having spoken three parables about the “lost and found”, Jesus turns to His disciples and tells them a story about a steward who had wasted the rich man’s goods. The man is often called “the dishonest steward”, but I think this is unkind and untrue. Dishonest means, “behaving or prone to behave in an untrustworthy, deceitful, or insincere way”, and I do not find the man guilty of this. To the contrary, he is open about what he does, and what he does he does sincerely. Jesus does not say he is dishonest and even his “lord” commends his behaviour, *Luk 16:8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.* He is unjust, unrighteous but not at this stage dishonest.

We have a totally unrealistic view of the world, as believers, when we paint it as a place of cut and dried choices, one thing right and one thing wrong, and as a result of this, we can come across as self righteous, unyielding bigots. Because of the nature of this world, its complexity, the difference in our knowledge, motivation and most importantly, what the Lord wants to achieve. We live on a spectrum of choices, which may be right or wrong depending on the time when you make them, and where you are viewing them from. Joseph knew this too well, *Gen 50:20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.* The same event could be viewed as evil and good, depending on your human viewpoint, but the viewpoint that counts is the Lord’s, “*but God meant it unto good*”.

There were a lot of bad choices in Joseph's life, some "neutral" choices and some life changing choices. The choice to tell his brothers about his dreams, the events which compromised with the wife in Potiphar's house, the events that occurred in prison, and the events as Egyptian chancellor but all of them leading to a good outcome, *Gen 50:19 And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? Gen 50:20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*

Peter wanted to save Jesus from death, a seemingly good thing, but it was not, *Mat 16:21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Mat 16:22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. Mat 16:23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.* It was a satanic idea to stop Christ dying for mankind, and what seemed good was not at all good.

When coming to terms with the story of stewards handling of things, it could be viewed as good or bad. The steward was in charge of his lord's estate and the day to day transactions. He had been lax in his business and things were catching up with him. He was certainly clever but he let the business run down. I suppose because his lord didn't take a great deal of notice of what went on and so the steward, unsupervised got lazier and perhaps did just enough to get by, and no more. Eventually he was accused of wasting his master's goods. The accuser, literally the διάβολος = diabolos, which is also incidentally what the devil is called, made trouble for this steward before his lord, *"and was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods"*.

It does not say how he wasted, or scattered the goods, and maybe it was just his lax way of doing business. He had a laissez faire way of accounting, a poor ledger or no records at all. When he sold his masters oil or flour, he kept the figures in his head and said to the customers that they could pay him the money as and when. He didn't account for what he did and he let the debts build up. He became an excellent example of the Proverb. *Pro 10:4 He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.*

The steward was stung into action by this accusation, when he was accused of wasting his masters goods. How could he secure his future now he was going to be unemployed? He did not have a pension, had no savings, presumably because he had thought that he would stay with his lord forever, as a perpetual servant. He could not do labouring because of his age and he was too embarrassed to sit in the temple begging and be seen by everybody as a failure. Thus he came to a resolution on the issue, *Luk 16:4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.* He had a cunning

plan that would cost him nothing at all, but make him lots of grateful friends who would look after him. He was sure by this plan that the future was secure.

So his plan was to call in the debts, except he would only take a part of the payment or a reduced payment for what was owed. As he had no records of payment, he could easily charge less for the goods and in the process have many grateful customers.

I am ashamed to say that one of my school friends, who worked in his father's beach cafe, behaved in a similar fashion. When I and my friends went down to see him, we gave him the money for ice creams and chocolates, and he gave us some money back as well as the treats. It was not honest on my part but it made him a very popular boy. And how many people are honest in giving back the money when they have been given too much change?

The master was about to get rid of the steward and with that he was giving up all hope of getting any of the goods back, as the whole matter of sales was left in the incapable hands of the lax steward, and the master had no records because he had left everything in his hands. I think that he was pleased to get anything back, *Luk 16:8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.*

The steward is unjust, because he does not charge his debtors with the amount they owe but it is better for the lord that he gets something back, rather than nothing. It is a catch 22 situation, where one is trapped by two contradictory conditions. The steward solves this by getting some of the master's money back and at the same time ingratiating himself with the debtors. He gets them to write a promissory note for ½ of the olive oil that he is owed and for 4/5th of the wheat and we assume that his master was very pleased with his shrewdness. We don't know the outcome of this story but he may we have been taken into employment again, "*because he had done wisely*", and a wise servant is hard to recruit.

The comment of the servant's master ends the story, *Luk 16:8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely:* then Jesus draws His conclusion, "*for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light*". This leaves **three conclusions** or **lessons** to the story, and whatever you like to think the story is about, these are the conclusions of Jesus, and it must tie in with what He has spoken.

- (1) *Luk 16:9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the **mammon** of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.*
- (2) *Luk 16:10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. Luk 16:11 If*

*therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous **mammon**, who will commit to your trust the true riches? Luk 16:12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?*

*(3) Luk 16:13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and **mammon**.*

You will not fail to see that the story told was about mammon and that Jesus' three conclusions are about mammon.

1st lesson. The word mammon = μαμμωνᾶς is a transliteration of the Greek, and it is supposed had a Chaldee origin, avarice deified. "Make friends of the mammon of **unrighteousness**", says the Lord. Unrighteousness comes from the same word as is "**unjust**", used of the servant. *Luk 16:8 And the lord commended the **unjust** steward.* I do not think that our Lord is telling us to behave like this steward, by being a highly dodgy salesman. But the principle is there, of using money, which is unrighteous money, but properly got, to do some good and to secure a welcome, from those you benefit. You cannot take money with you when you go, so do some good with it while you are here.

When is this? It is "*when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations*". Fail = ἐκλείπω = ek-li'-po or eclipse, is also a euphemism for death, *Heb 1:11 They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; Heb 1:12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and **thy years shall not fail** (ἐκλείπω).* To be eclipsed is when one heavenly body such as a moon or planet moves into the shadow of another heavenly body, and its light goes out. When your light goes out, when you have been eclipsed, there will still be a welcome committee in heaven by those you have helped. You have done some good with your money and not consumed it all on yourself, like the prodigal.

The first lesson to the disciples is to be generous with the things of this world, and you will see the fruit in heaven.

2nd lesson. *Luk 16:10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. Luk 16:11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? Luk 16:12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?* The steward in the story wasn't very faithful, he was unjust and he is a warning to the disciples that if you cannot be trusted with unrighteous mammon how do you expect to be trusted with "true"? We have the words "true **riches**", but the word "riches" is not in the text, and it has been supplied by ellipsis. Ellipsis is the act of leaving out a word or words from a sentence deliberately, when the meaning

can be understood without them. Well, you can supply lots of words connected with “true.....”, but perhaps the best is in, *Mat 6:20 But lay up for yourselves **treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: Mat 6:21 For where your **treasure** is, there will your heart be also.*

If you can be faithful, and our servant in the story wasn’t, faithful in small things, you can be trusted to be faithful in larger things. It follows that if you cannot be trusted in the little things you certainly cannot be trusted in the big things. This comment of Jesus has a resonance with the parable of the talents, *Mat 25:24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed; Mat 25:25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.*

Lesson 2 tells us that our stewardship will mark us out as trustworthy or crooked.

3rd lesson. *Luk 16:13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.* The servant on our story was serving two masters. He was trying to serve his lord and he was trying to serve himself by securing his future with mammon. He just could not do it, serve the two at the same time, because of competing loyalties. He could not serve God and mammon.

I do not think that earning your wages is necessarily serving mammon. It is using mammon in a right way to provide for your family needs, but when it becomes something in its own right, and object which is not being treated in the way God intended, it goes from being mammon of righteousness, to becoming the mammon of unrighteousness.

Lesson 3, shows us that we should be sure who we are serving, and not deceive ourselves by covetousness, into thinking we are serving God, when in truth we are serving mammon. We might say that the story was not about stewardship, but was more properly a parable about mammon.

I suppose Jesus taught this story about mammon many times, for example, he taught it in Matthew’s Gospel. Important things cannot be said enough times, and they require thinking about, *Ecc 12:11 Words from wise people are like spurs. Their collected sayings are like nails that have been driven in firmly. They come from one shepherd.* GW.

139. The Pharisees and Mammon *Luke 16: 14 - 15*

Luk 16:14 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. Luk 16:15 And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

We have seen the parable of the servant and his attitude to mammon, to which we find the Pharisees listening in and smirking and sneering at Jesus. The Pharisees were covetous, they hung on to wealth, they were greedy, self-interested people, and so the three lessons about mammon that Jesus had spoken of, were a laughing matter to them.

Lesson 1 to the disciples is to be generous with the things of this world, and you will see the fruit in heaven.

Lesson 2 tells us that our stewardship will mark us out as trustworthy or crooked.

Lesson 3 shows us that we should be sure who we are serving, and not deceive ourselves by covetousness, into thinking we are serving God when in truth we are serving mammon.

What sort of people were these Pharisees? I do not see that they were particularly concerned with the Kingdom of Heaven, with the unseen world to come. I say this because they shut it up to men and themselves, *Mat 23:13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.* They had a view of the Kingdom as an earthly manifestation, as something that appears in time, but they were wrong, *Luk 17:20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Luk 17:21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, **the kingdom of God is within you.***

They were religious people, zealous, but they had no understanding of what God was doing, as the Pharisee Nicodemus that came by night to Jesus was told concerning the New Birth, *Joh 3:9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Joh 3:10 Jesus answered and said unto him, **Art thou a teacher of Israel, and knowest not these things?** Joh 3:11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. Joh 3:12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?* He was an ignorant teacher of Israel, he was a blind guide, he was a Pharisee.

The Pharisees were also poor stewards of the things of God and could not be trusted with His treasure, and the parable of the steward and its conclusions, could have been as much for the Pharisees as for the disciples. They claimed the

same template for their religion, but they had made a different creature out of their belief. I puzzled over why they even bothered with Judaism because what they had was a monstrous parody of the truth. They believed a lie.

And I thought, “Why did the Pharisees bother with the Jewish religion when they had not followed its true principles?” Why does a person like this even bother with any religion? The Sadducees were even more remarkable companions of the Pharisees. They did not even believe in the afterlife, and for them religion was the stuff of the here and now, *Mat 22:23 The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is **no resurrection**, and asked him, at 22:24 Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Mat 22:25 Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: Mat 22:26 Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. Mat 22:27 And last of all the woman died also. Mat 22:28 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. Mat 22:29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. Mat 22:30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.*

Luke gives us a little more information. *Luk 20:35 But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Luk 20:36 Neither can they die any more: for they are **equal unto the angels**; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Luk 20:37 Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Luk 20:38 For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.*

Jesus contradicts them. We are equal, ἰσάγγελος = eesangellos (**equal unto the angels**), we are the same as angels when we enter heaven. This is what we shall be like. But the Sadducees had a religion which according to them, only existed in the present world. What they had was humanism pure and simple, not Judaism. According to the American Humanist Association,

Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without theism or other supernatural beliefs, and affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfilment that aspire to the greater good (sic! Who says it is).

That’s total rubbish, because without an absolute power, God, there is no “greater good”, there is no good at all, only what you do, utilitarianism, with no absolute moral value. Hence without a God, the words “responsibility”, “ethical lives”, and “greater good” have zero meaning. The differences between the

Pharisees and the Sadducees did not stop them from working together against Jesus either and they were unanimous in their condemnation of Him because He dismantled their false world.

The Pharisees' Judaism is what is practiced today, as they cannot make sacrifices at the Temple and instead they worship in synagogues. The Sadducees were the wealthy upper classes who were involved with the priesthood. They completely rejected oral law, and unlike the Pharisees, their lives revolved around the Temple.

Why did these men bother with religion as it had no other root than in themselves, but perhaps that is the reason? They, like all men, believe in something because, as unique individuals among the creation, God has put in them a religious need, a need to know The **CREATOR**, *Ecc 3:11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, **He has set eternity in their heart, without which man cannot find out the work that God makes from the beginning even to the end.*** All men are made with the likeness of God, *Gen 1:26 And God said, **let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;*** A stamp of the makers mark, a universal serial number, an identity, the image of God, and man is trying to find His maker. As Augustine said, 'You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they can find peace in you.'

Man is a religious creature by his very nature. He searches out the cosmos to find his origins and his God. He seeks Him through the things He has made, as we saw those ancient Inca stargazers, looking at the night sky, and thinking where they came from. And as they peeped into the darkness of space they sought from whence they came,

(p58 Babel or Babylon) They were a people who looked to the stars for guidance and to understand this we must position ourselves in the high Andes, from where you could see the Milky Way, a river in the sky, stars in abundance and more than that, you could see the gas clouds which they thought were constellations and according to which tribe you belonged, you went to your constellation when you died.

Religion remains an integral part of many people's lives, and 84% of the world's population identifies with a religious group. And so men set out their stalls in the religious market place and they sell their brand of sweets and cakes, that they think will appeal to the tastes of men but nobody tests the different faiths, and some people believe that all paths lead to God. It would be very interesting if we had a Which? report on religion, so that you could compare them, see their merits and demerits.

I do not know why some people choose one brand over another? Perhaps they are like washing powders that all wash whiter than other brands, or a more

satisfying smoke than other cigarettes, or just a famous brand like Heinz which charges you a lot more but tastes much the same as the cheaper brands. They cannot agree a standard by which to compare the religions that man uses, and many Christians would be stumped if asked why their religion was better than any other, and why they chose to be a “Christian”.

The distinctive of the faith of Jesus Christ, of course is that He is the only religious leader who made the Universe, came down from heaven, died as a man and come back from the grave, and ascended back into heaven as God Almighty. No one else has come near to doing all of this. It deserves our thorough attention. Those are the facts of Christianity but you must have them in you before you can say I am a believer.

In the process of making their religion, the Pharisees and Sadducees neglected the roots of their faith, limited themselves to this world and embraced the god Mammon. What they believed had become more important than what God had said, and suddenly they were on a roll. But they were delusional because sin held them in its grip. They could not see properly, and they certainly could not act properly. They had the lineage of Abraham but they didn't have the grace of God, *Joh 8:39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. Joh 8:40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Joh 8:41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.*

You can now understand Jesus reply to these smirking men, *Luk 16:15 And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly **esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.*** That is a great leveller if ever there was one. Beware of trying to be popular, trying to get the adulation of men, because what men esteem is not what God esteems, it is an abomination in God's sight. We should if anything be making Christ the object of all men's esteem and ourselves as nothing.

In the Old Testament the men of Korah, of the priestly tribe, thought that “they could be something”, and they raised themselves against Christ, *Num 16:1 Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: Num 16:2 And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: Num 16:3 And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the*

LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?

The ringleaders were destroyed but later we read that the remainder had learned their lesson, because in the Psalms it says, *Psa 84:1 **To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.** How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!..... Psa 84:10 One day in your courtyards is better than a thousand anywhere else. **I would rather stand in the entrance to my God's house than live inside wicked people's homes.*** GW.

Man is so concerned to be somebody, to have a place at the top table, to do some important work, to be recognised that he forgets his place in the universe. We pray to God about what we should do and go off and do it without waiting for an answer from Him. We use Him to serve our needs, just as the Pharisees and Sadducees did, and if we are honest, we just use Him to get what we want, and Jesus could have spoken to us as well as those men, “*Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God*”.

If we are truly God’s people, we should examine how we serve Him and what we do, instead of making excuses for ourselves while we play our games with our time. While we indulge ourselves by saying that we cannot possibly concentrate on Christ all of the time and we have other things to do, and so we pass the time elsewhere. We are no different from the people of Jesus’ day if we are like that. We only want Him for what we can get from Him and that does not mean being around Him forever. We are deriding Him, like the Pharisees did.

It is possible to be covetous not just of money, but covetous of time. The Christian may not be covetous of mammon, but he sure covets time, his time not God’s time. And why, like those Pharisees, would he want to go and be with Jesus and have his own neat package of religion spoiled?

140. The Law Does Not Fail Luke 16: 16 - 18

Luk 16:16 The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. Luk 16:17 And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. Luk 16:18 Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

The Pharisees were a law unto themselves, and they did not do what they told others to do, *Mat 23:2 The Pharisees and the teachers of the Law are experts in the Law of Moses. Mat 23:3 So obey everything they teach you, but don't do as they do. After all, they say one thing and do something else.* CEV. They were indifferent to the practices of the Law of Moses, favouring their traditions.

Jesus reminds them and all of us that the Law is less likely to fail, than the heavens and earth are to pass away, *Luk 16:17 Heaven and earth will disappear before the smallest letter of the Law does.* CEV. That in itself is an amazing statement because it implies that the “law” will outlast the current universe and will be in operation for the whole span of this present “time”, *Rev 10:5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, Rev 10:6 And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, **that there should be time no longer.***

What is the first thing that the eternal God created? Before the angels, before the world, before man, the Lord created **time**. Just what time is difficult to say, but it is a manufactured and necessary artefact of God, necessary to fulfil the purpose of God in Jesus Christ. We perceive time as a progression of events that only goes one way, and that is the direction of change. To visualise time and to mark its passing, we have invented clocks, but God gave us the Sun and the Moon, *Gen 1:14 Then God said, "Let there be lights in the sky to separate the day from the night. They will be signs and will mark religious festivals, days, and years.* GW. Although worship was not implemented it was anticipated. That for us was all the definition of time that we needed.

To us mortals, events can be experienced as past, present and future, yet all of these temporal events are not seen in the same light by God, *Isa 46:9 Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Isa 46:10 **Declaring the end from the beginning,** and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:* For God, apparently, time does not exist, *Isa 57:15 For thus said the high and exalted One, Inhabiting eternity, and holy is His name: 'In the high and holy place I dwell, And with the bruised and humble of spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of bruised ones,'* God lives beyond the created realm of time, in the forever, and is not subject to it like we.

We may mistakenly say that time stops when Joshua has his long day, *Jos 10:12 Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. Jos 10:13 And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had*

avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. Jos 10:14 And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel. But that would be wrong, for Joshua still grows old, and the world still continues its course. Time like an ever rolling stream sweeps all its sons away. Once in motion it does not stop but it can appear to.

We already have accepted this fact of God's nature, timelessness, because we believe in prophecy, where things are foretold before they happen, and the only way that can be true is if the end is known, at some point before it happens. An event like the death of Christ, *Rev 13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of **the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*** Jesus died for our sins, thousands of years before He was killed on the cross, so all men could partake in His death, both the Old Testament saints and the New Testament saints. All are declared righteous together. It is called proleptic justification for the OT saints, being declared just, before the event of Christ's death, taking it as "before its time", προλαμβάνω, or overtaken. But in fact that event took place outside of time.

I cannot say what it is like to live without time, any more than I can say what it is to live and breathe underwater, or what it is like to be born with wings, but I believe the Bible when it says time will vanish. Time enables us differentiate between the Old Testament and the New Testament, and here is another wonder of God. The things in the Old Testament are not suddenly coming into being, but they are in existence already but are not yet fully revealed. The things which are of Christ, including His death, the shadows of Christ, such as the furniture of the Tabernacle, the sacrificial laws, the types, such as the "lamb of God" were all fully formed from eternity and translated into time, *Heb 8:5 They serve at a place that is a pattern, **a shadow, of what is in heaven.** When Moses was about to make the tent, God warned him, "Be sure to make everything based on the plan I showed you on the mountain."*

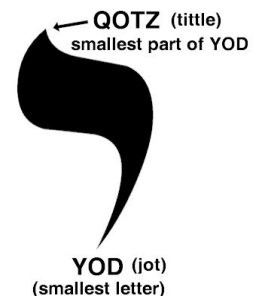
But there is another twist to the story, namely, "that heavens plans were constructed on earth". We often view the revelation of Christ as progressive revelation, going forward in time, from where we are, and we see it from our position, as from creatures bound by time. There is a tendency to think that because something about redemption was revealed, say, to Moses, that it is the first time that the event had occurred. The reality is that it was all present and complete in Christ at "the beginning". The things of Christ which are the reality are fed into time by Him and they only "appear" to us as being a new occurrence. Also, they are fed into time as shadow, leading to the reality of Christ, *Col 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Col 2:17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.*

When the Law was given on Mt. Sinai, it was **Christ revealing His heart to men**. God was saying that “I am like this, so do this law and you will be like Me and you will live”. The Law was already in Christ, in His being and nature, and although it appears to transfer from Moses to Christ later on at the time of Jesus and the new covenant, it was always in Jesus Christ and it always had been, and always will be, *1Co 9:21 To those free from the law I became like one free from the law (though I am not free from God’s law but **under the law of Christ**) to gain those free from the law.* NET.

Which answers the question, “What happens to the law when time ceases?” Does the law pass away too? No it does not, because that Law, the written commands, the sacrifices of God, the types, are all found in the nature of Christ, who lives forever. So the Law which passes away, in time, lives forever in Jesus.

This answers, I think, another question which puzzles us, and that is, how can man be responsible and have free will, and at the same time God is Sovereign, in control of all things. Surely man can surprise God’s intentions, and outwit His purpose if that is true that he has free will? But as we said, God functions in eternity and man functions in time and that, *Isa 46:10 From the beginning I predicted the outcome; long ago I foretold what would happen. I said that my plans would never fail, that I would do everything I intended to do.* GNB. This I think will answer our question, and when we go to be with Christ, we see everything from a new perspective. Of course, we want His sovereignty to be true, or else how have we any certain hope of eternity. But O, how we love the freedom to choose, how we love to think that we have freedom.

As for now, at this time, the smallest letter of the law, the “tittle” or “horn”, shall not be missed out, *Mat 5:18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.* The $\iota\omega\tau\alpha$ “or jot”, in the Greek language, answers to “yod”, “י” in the Hebrew, the least of all the letters in the alphabet and the tittle (qotz) is the smallest part of the “yod”. But when time ceases to be, when we are in eternity with Christ, the law will cease as an external thing, and **it will be all in Christ in eternity.**



Luk 16:16 The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. The Law and the Prophets was up to the time of John the Baptist, not that they ceased or became of no effect but that they marked the boundary of the Kingdom, they ushered in the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Christ. The former, the Law and the Prophets were preparatory for the coming Messiah and His Kingdom. And that Kingdom would outlast all, until the law had accomplished its work and time has ceased to

operate, *Luk 16:17 And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.*

But before the end of time, before time ceases, Christ would put His seal upon what He has spoken, and this is the reason, I think, that the verse on divorce and remarriage is placed here, *Luk 16:18 Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.*

Marriage is a creation ordinance. By that I mean, it was given by God to His newly formed creation, *Gen 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.* It is the definitive law of marriage, and trumps all other variants, *Mat 19:4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, Mat 19:5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Mat 19:6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. Mat 19:7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? Mat 19:8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.*

The Jews had a hard heart, an unforgiving and an unyielding heart, that made them incapable of being faithful to their vow of marriage. As a concession to this hardness of heart, God allowed them to divorce their wives, with a caveat, *Mat 19:9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for **fornication**, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth **her which is put away** doth commit adultery.* The words, “**her which is put away**” means divorced, *Mat 5:32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall **marry her that is divorced** committeth adultery.*

Christ goes back to the time of Adam to re-establish the purity of marriage, showing how the condition of the Jews necessitated the temporary change, but it was not so from the beginning. The law of Christ was supreme over the Jewish law, because the Jewish law failed because of sin. Marriage was inviolate, like the law, and for this reason, I think that this law regarding marriage, appears here.

Men, who are pressing in to Christ’s Kingdom, have to see that it is not a lawless Kingdom, it is a Kingdom where heaven will pass away before the law does. It is like a marriage, you can put away your wife, but that is legitimate, only on certain conditions. A genuine marriage lasts for this time, as an earthly husband

and wife, until heaven and earth pass away, and then the true marriage with Christ occurs, replacing the former.

There is another reason that I think that marriage is mentioned here, *2Co 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as **the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.** 2Co 11:4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.*

It was the adultery that Eve committed with satan, by not obeying the voice of God and in turn leading her husband away from truth. Eve broke the mould of marriage, *Eph 5:24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as **Christ also loved the church**, and gave himself for it;* Eve disobeyed the law and so the original sin was conceived, in rebellion against God. The men of Jesus day and the men of today who do not submit to the law of Christ are rebels and shall receive the reward of their error.

This failure of the woman in obedience towards her husband had to be silenced, *1Ti 2:11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. 1Ti 2:12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. 1Ti 2:13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve. 1Ti 2:14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.*

141. Birth Doesn't Define Death Luke 16: 19 - 23

Luk 16:19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: Luk 16:20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, Luk 16:21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. Luk 16:22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; Luk 16:23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

I first want to address the subject of whether “the rich man and Lazarus” is a parable or not because some, the Jehovah’s Witnesses for example say that it is. My position is that it is not a parable. There is reason for arguing Jesus is not in a parabolic mode in this account. A few of the account’s characteristics are unusual for parables. For example, it is one of the few stories to discuss the world to come and afterlife in some detail beyond a mere reference to future

judgment. It is also unusual to give the character in the parable a name, Lazarus. I quote Darrell I. Bock, *Southwestern Journal of Theology* vol. 40,

It is also the only parable (sic!) to have any of its characters named. The unique naming of Lazarus (and not the rich man) adds important detail to the account which explains the exceptional nature of the reference. His name, which in Hebrew is a contraction of the name Eleazar means "God helps." So the name shows a point of the story. In addition, the fact that the rich man knows Lazarus's name in addressing him in the afterlife (v. 24) shows the rich man knew who he was on earth. This detail makes the rich man's ignoring of Lazarus's plight even more explicit. If Lazarus was of no use to him, then Lazarus was of no usefulness. He knew the man and his plight, even down to his name, but did nothing. Finally, the account reflects parallel themes in the larger culture, both in Egypt and in Judaism. This background suggests that aspects of the story were a part of popular reflection.

Is the author of that right when he says the rich man did nothing to help Lazarus? I think his judgement on the rich man is a bit too harsh, and to make the rich man into a worse villain is not warranted, *Luk 16:21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table:* suggests that he did get food from the rich man, albeit scraps. I wonder if many of you would have invited a stinky, sore ridden beggar to lunch every day. And what of those people who brought him to the rich man's house and parked him on the driveway, couldn't they have done something for Lazarus. Were they just targeting the rich man, playing on his benevolence, by taking Lazarus to his gate and dropping him off every day? The rich man never told Lazarus to clear off, and he could have learned his name by talking to him.

The rich man was not under a perpetual ordinance to take care of a beggar was he? *Lev 25:39 And if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant: Lev 25:40 But as an hired servant, and as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, and **shall serve thee unto the year of jubile:** Lev 25:41 And then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return.* This beggar Lazarus had friends who carried him to the rich man's gate, so couldn't they have provided for him, or was it easier for them to take their problem elsewhere, so it wasn't in their back yard.

There is a problem with giving when you are taken for a ride, because you are sensitive to wants over needs, when you have this story of Lazarus hanging over you, when you are told to give to whoever asks for anything, when you are told to give and not count the cost. And that sort of giving fuels all kinds of addictions and makes the Christian a soft touch and he forgets the other scriptures like, *2Th*

3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat..... Pro 6:9 How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Pro 6:10 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: Pro 6:11 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.

So I think that this story isn't about poverty and riches, although it seems to be, but that this story looks at the outcome of a rich man's life and the outcome of a poor man's life. We might think superficially that this is a story with the moral that riches are bad and that poverty is good, if you want to go to heaven. It seemingly sends the message that worldly, earthly, possessions are of no benefit in the afterlife and those who have suffered on Earth will receive their reward in Heaven.

But we haven't seen the lives of those men, what they did to get rich and what they did to become poor, what their moral state was, what their nature as people was like. We have no idea about the two except they were both males, that the poor man was called Lazarus and had to be carried to his preferred begging site because he was disabled, where he lay covered in sores and that the rich man, whose name we do not know, ate well and dressed well, hardly a crime. We assume that both were Jewish, because it makes the story totally different if they are not, and that one could be a Jew and one was a Gentile. The Gentile gets his just rewards and the Jew his!

The only difference between the two men as far as I can see, is this statement, *Luk 16:25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou **in thy lifetime** receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.* One received a lifetime of good things, the other received a lifetime of evil things and for that, one is tormented and the other is comforted.

This is given an interpretation like, "This teaches us that we should help all those that need our help and those that want justice. This also tells us to learn to serve which is similar to what God is teaching us in today's gospel. We should serve others instead of being served without expecting others to do the same for us", and this is so woke and missing the point and you could illustrate that better using a different analogy, like "the good Samaritan". But this is not a "good Samaritan" story, about doing good, it is a story about heaven and hell.

Being rich is not a sin, yes it makes getting into the Kingdom of Heaven difficult, but not impossible, *Luk 18:24 Jesus saw how sad the man was. So he said, "It's terribly hard for rich people to get into God's kingdom! CEV.* As the writer of Proverbs said, *Pro 30:8 Remove far from me vanity and lies: **give me neither poverty nor riches**; feed me with food convenient for me:* Mammon is not bad per se, but how it is used may be bad. Poverty is equally not good and is not a

blessing. In fact, wasn't riches, the good life, a result of doing right, wasn't that how you could be rich under law? *Deu 28:1 And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: Deu 28:2 **And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee**, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.*

So if riches and poverty are not the deciding factor as to why a man should go to heaven or hell, and in the absence of any clear indication in the story as to why they ended up where they did, we are left scratching our head. We are thrown upon the sovereignty of God, as Hannah, Samuel's mother was, *1Sa 2:6 The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. 1Sa 2:7 The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. 1Sa 2:8 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them.*

There is the clear distinction between the men in death, *Luk 16:22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; Luk 16:23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.* The path is to eternal life, since both men have eternal life, but only one has it with Abraham, and the other has it in hell, and it is different.

The only grounds that a sinner is saved, and both Lazarus and the rich man were sinners, is by the Grace of God. The most that we can say about these two men is that Lazarus was **elect** and the rich man was not. For in their characters and friends there is nothing that makes one or the other worthy. It is all of grace.

And as we look at that as the central theme of the story, we see in it ourselves, whisked to heaven by angels (or so we hope), and the bad man getting what's coming to him, and we good people all living happily in the ever after, and we thank God for this passage to heaven. We thank Him we are not like other men. But we somehow conveniently fail to register, fail to remember that Lazarus was a poor beggar, and that he was covered in sores, and that he was disabled and we are not much like him really, and we bear too much the resemblance of the rich man. What price the story now! The poor beggar gets into heaven and the rich man is cast out, and we are suddenly left choking on our luxury muesli, crying into our high priced Waitrose Earl Grey tea!

We quickly pass over this small detail of the story, because we have to convince ourselves that we are not greedy, and that we only have sufficient for a modest lifestyle, and we are in many ways like Lazarus, and more so than the rich man.

But look in your wardrobes and tell me that you are poor! So we try a different tack, we start to think about the good we do, and we run through a checklist of how good we are, and we are just good people, how charitable and we don't commit adultery, we do our religious duties, religiously, every day, and we give of all that we possess and suddenly and miraculously, we have become.... the last person we wanted to become, we have become the Pharisee who said, *Luk 18:11 God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. Luk 18:12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.*

We have more in common with the rich man and a rich Pharisee at that, than with the poor man of our story, so will we end up in hell with him? If it is a story solely about wealth being wrong, most surely we will. If it is about the "virtue" of poverty and a deprived life making you fit for heaven, then we are not going there. But there is no virtue signalling about poverty being good and riches being bad.

It is a story about the other life, the afterlife, the life in heaven and the journey from this life to the next, and what happens there. It is almost like the story of the Christmas Carol, because it shows what will happen to a man if he does not change, but with the possibility of redemption hidden in its text,

A churchyard. Here, then, the wretched man whose name he had now to learn, lay underneath the ground. It was a worthy place. Walled in by houses; overrun by grass and weeds, the growth of vegetation's death, not life; choked up with too much burying; fat with repleted appetite. A worthy place! The Spirit stood among the graves, and pointed down to One. He advanced towards it trembling. The Phantom was exactly as it had been, but he dreaded that he saw new meaning in its solemn shape.

"Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point," said Scrooge, "answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?" Still the Ghost pointed downward to the grave by which it stood. "Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead," said Scrooge. "But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me." The Spirit was immovable as ever. Scrooge crept towards it, trembling as he went; and following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name, EBENEZER SCROOGE.

We can avoid the fate of the rich man, because for us, we have not begun that final journey, and for us these are the "shadows of the things that may be". What we do about it is important. If there was a medicine that we could take to

guarantee us everlasting life, we would be a fool not to take it and take it quickly. But with Jesus words, we “um and ah” about taking the remedy, and we take as little of the medicine as possible, just enough to think that we are well, enough to make our conscience quiet, at least that is how it feels. We do not even know half the things that Jesus requires but we are quite convinced that we are going to heaven. And the Jews with Jesus had the same idea, and the rich man had the same idea, but they were misguided. We shall examine this next time.

For now we see the deaths of the two men. The rich man, no doubt, had the accolades of his friends, fine speeches about how good he was and the ringing words of the burial service to conclude his earthly journey, “FORASMUCH as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother here departed: we therefore commit his body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life.....” But the hope of his friends is an illusion, as it is for most people, and if they could see the true state of him, they would shudder, *Luk 16:23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments.*

As his eyes gets used to his new surroundings and he begins to get his thoughts together, and as the heat begins to get hotter and hotter, he glimpses of all people, Abraham, in the far distance. There may be some comfort even here, if only Abraham will be reasonable. He sees Lazarus being comforted by Abraham, but it is not certain that Lazarus can see him. There is perhaps a one way glass that enables the wicked to look at the good but not the other way around. So he asks for water but Lazarus cannot bring it, the chasm is too great to bridge, they are far apart.

Then a moment of exquisite panic like he has never felt, a sense of the reality of his situation, a feeling of life after death, but it was a very different life he was experiencing too what he had expected. And as I write this there are thousand waking from their death beds, in astonishment, that they had not expected such a place either.

142. They Have Got Moses *Luke 16: 23 - 31*

Luk 16:23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Luk 16:24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. Luk 16:25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy

good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. Luk 16:26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Luk 16:27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: Luk 16:28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Luk 16:29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. Luk 16:30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. Luk 16:31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

We cannot put our finger on what specific sins led to the rich man's demise or what actions the poor man had carried out to get him into heaven. This is where you use the rear view mirror and start working backwards from the conclusion of the story, to what the men may or may not have done. I don't think that is very helpful and it leads us on a wild chase and diverts us from the main theme of the passage. We are not looking to find out what the men have done in life to get here, but we are looking at why they end up where they do in death. And we look too much to the earlier words of this story and not enough to the end of the story.

As we are still working in the Old Testament, we shall use the Old Testament to show that both men were sinners, *Ecc 7:20 For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.* If both men were sinners, why had one been forgiven and one not forgiven? It was because of this, *Deu 6:24 And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. Deu 6:25 And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.* One was God fearing and the other was not.

David acknowledged his sin, *Psa 51:1 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Psa 51:2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Psa 51:3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Psa 51:4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.* He saw the only way to escape the consequences of sin was to fall upon the mercy of God, and in this he feared God.

We are creatures of time, and I mean by this that we are bound by time and have not yet entered into what is called eternity, or timelessness. In the Old

Testament times they saw redemption less clearly than we do. But we in turn do not see perfectly, *1Co 13:11 When we were children, we thought and reasoned as children do. But when we grew up, we quit our childish ways. 1Co 13:12 Now all we can see of God is like a cloudy picture in a mirror. Later we will see him face to face. We don't know everything, but then we will, just as God completely understands us.* CEV. We still have a lot of growing up to do but when we go to Heaven we will understand.

When we leave this earth in death, we leave the realm of time and enter eternity, *Rev 22:5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.* Time ceases and becomes timeless, *Rev 10:6 And swear by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that **there should be time no longer.*** Time = χρόνος = chronos. So it is silly to say the Old Testament saints died **before** the New Testament saints if there is no time, we die and we are all there. The Old Testament saint saw Christ in a parable as it were, on earth as a shadow of the things to come, *Col 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Col 2:17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.* The body that cast the shadow in the Old Testament was Jesus and we are saved in exactly the same way as they were, through divine mercy and human faith, which incidentally is a gift of God.

The Old Testament saints are not separated from us New Testament saints by time, when we die, *Heb 11:37 Some were stoned to death, sawed in half, and killed with swords. Some wore the skins of sheep and goats. Some were poor, abused, and mistreated. Heb 11:38 The world didn't deserve these good people. Some wandered around in deserts and mountains and lived in caves and holes in the ground. Heb 11:39 All these people were known for their faith, but none of them received what God had promised. Heb 11:40 God planned to give us something very special so that **we would gain eternal life WITH them.*** GW. We all get saved together, and it does not say they “get saved with us” but “**we with them**”, implying that they got it before we did in a manner of speaking.

The Transfiguration is an event out of time. We see Moses and Elijah, who lived 700 years apart in time, but together, speaking of an event which was in the future, about which the Disciples knew nothing, *Luk 9:30 And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Luk 9:31 Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.* They were in the “glory”, in eternity which knew no time.

Sin is a theme in the Old Testament but what about the punishment for sin? That part of Scripture we call the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, is not New Testament, it is in fact the Old Testament, up to the crucifixion, and Jesus, speaking to these Jews, speaks of hell and punishment under the Old Testament. He speaks of this place more than any other person in the Bible and that must be because He knows it, because He has made it. But going back further in the Scripture, how did the early Jews view hell and punishment? For sure, Hell is in full vigour in the Old Testament.

If father Abraham says, *Luk 16:29 Abraham saith unto him, They have **Moses and the prophets**; let them hear them.* He must mean that in the writing of Moses and the prophets, there was sufficient guidance for the rich man's brothers to avoid this place of torment. You see, they couldn't yet appeal to the saving work of Christ and His death and resurrection, for it had not been revealed to them, *Luk 16:30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. Luk 16:31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*

He is saying that if a man could go back to this life from hell, it would have tremendous power in putting people off of going this place. But Abraham says it wouldn't make any difference to what they believed, as they already had witnesses to it, Moses and the prophets. The resurrection of a person would not do the sinner any good whatsoever.

And please note, the rich man is conscious, and he knows that in that place, he cannot come back from where he is. So much for the Jehovah's Witnesses who say there is no eternal punishment only annihilation of the wicked. Liars! Those evil people who would deny Christ's words are here confronted with their error. They do not believe this is a true story and they relegate it to the status of a parable to defend their lie.

Well, did the Old Testament tell of the hell of punishment or not? I want to show that it did and that God showed them this in very graphic way. First let us look at the story of the men of Korah, who thought that they were as entitled as the rest of their priestly brethren, to offer incense to the Lord, *Num 16:3 They came together to confront Moses and Aaron and said to them, "You've gone far enough! Everyone in the whole community is holy, and the LORD is among them. Why do you set yourselves above the LORD's assembly?"* GW.

Moses got the men to bring their incense burners to the tent of the meeting, *Num 16:16 Moses said to Korah, "Tomorrow you and all your followers must come into the LORD's presence. Aaron will also be there with you. Num 16:17 Each man will take his incense burner and put incense in it. They will offer all 250 incense burners to the LORD. Then you and Aaron offer your incense*

burners." Num 16:18 So each man took his incense burner, put burning coals and incense in it, and stood with Moses and Aaron at the entrance to the tent of meeting. GW.

To show the seriousness of purpose God called upon the people to separate themselves from the men of Korah, Num 16:20 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, Num 16:21 "Move away from these men, and I'll destroy them in an instant." Num 16:22 Immediately, they bowed with their faces touching the ground and said, "O God, you are the God who gives the breath of life to everyone! If one man sins, will you be angry with the whole community?" Num 16:23 Then the LORD said to Moses, Num 16:24 "Tell the community: Move away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram." Num 16:25 Moses got up and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the leaders of Israel followed him. Num 16:26 He said to the community, "Move away from the tents of these wicked men. Don't touch anything that belongs to them, or you'll be swept away because of all their sins." Num 16:27 So they moved away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Dathan and Abiram had come out and were standing at the entrances to their tents with their wives and children. GW.

Then the Lord executed His wrath upon them, Num 16:28 Moses said, "This is how you will know that the LORD sent me to do all these things and that it wasn't my idea: Num 16:29 If these men die like all other people—if they die a natural death—then the LORD hasn't sent me. Num 16:30 But if the LORD does something totally new—if the ground opens up, swallows them and everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive to their graves (לִיאֹל) —then you'll know that these men have treated the LORD with contempt." Num 16:31 As soon as he had finished saying all this, the ground under them split, Num 16:32 and the earth opened up to swallow them, their families, the followers of Korah, and all their property. Num 16:33 They went down alive to their graves (לִיאֹל) with everything that belonged to them. The ground covered them, and so they disappeared from the assembly. Num 16:34 All the Israelites around them ran away when they heard their screams. They thought the ground would swallow them, too. Num 16:35 Fire came from the LORD and consumed the 250 men who were offering incense. GW.

The word "pit" is לִיאֹל = she'ôl and in the Greek it is ᾗδης = hadēs, hell, the world of the dead, the grave, gravedom. That I think is why God publicly gave His judgement, so as to impress upon their sinful minds His Righteousness and His Judgment.

Isa 14:9 Hell (לִיאֹל) from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. Now, if you had been standing in the crowds watching this spectacle you would have gasped in horror and surprise, you would have gone away from that scene traumatised by the terror of

what God had done to His own people. You probably would not have slept that night, you would have replayed those terrible events over and over again, burning them deeply in your mind and you may have suffered flash backs or post traumatic shock with all the associated physical symptoms of that event.

If you have seen pictures of the horrors of war, the bloodied bodies of the dead, the sudden and certain deaths of young men, you realise that "A picture is worth a thousand words", and in those graphic images are conveyed so much more than words. God had certainly shown them hell, as if they were partaking in it, but the Israelites did not learn the lesson, *1Co 10:10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. 1Co 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. 1Co 10:12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*

The question arises, why did not God smite them secretly instead of publicly executing the men? I think that the public event was to teach a lesson, that breaking any of the commands was taken seriously, it did get punished, and the punishment was severe, *Num 16:33 They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into **the pit**, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.*

Sheol, hell, is used of the grave and sometimes it is used of the hell of punishment in that "unseen place". For example the grave in, *Eze 31:15 Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when he went down to the grave I caused a mourning: I covered the deep for him, and I restrained the floods thereof, and the great waters were stayed: and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him.* A place of punishment in, *Psa 9:17 The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.* The word sheol is used in 63 verses of the Hebrew Old Testament and hades in 66 verses of the Greek Old Testament, so the subject is taught there.

Daniel the beloved prophet of the exile, the man who withstood Nebuchadnezzar, certainly had to be listened to by the Jews, *Dan 12:1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. Dan 12:2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, **some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.** Dan 12:3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.* There are the words, "**some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt**", in respect of life beyond the grave.

Isaiah sees the time coming when all men (the remnant) would see the everlasting punishment of the wicked, *Isa 66:23 And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. Isa 66:24 And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: **for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched**; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.*

There is so much information on hell and heaven that it seems negligent to not find it in the Old Testament, *2Ki 2:11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and **Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven**.* What did they find so hard to understand? They are like the Christians, which carry Bibles but do not use them except for a show of piety on Sunday's. The pristine pages of the Old Testament are kept closed, unread, because they think that it is irrelevant to them. It is like the so called junk DNA, left over when the New Testament was built out of the Old, and they fail to see that it is vital scaffolding for the New Testament. In fact I would go as far as to say, that you cannot neglect it, and to build the faith without the Old Testament, is like building a castle on air, or a house on sand.

And that is the closing argument from father Abraham. They don't need somebody to rise again and go back to tell the 5 brothers about the place of torment, because **they have the Old Testament**. As Paul says, *Rom 10:6 But people whose faith makes them acceptable to God will never ask, "Who will go up to heaven to bring Christ down?" Rom 10:7 Neither will they ask, "Who will go down into the world of the dead to raise him to life?" Rom 10:8 All who are acceptable because of their faith simply say, "The message is as near as your mouth or your heart." And this is the same message we preach about faith. CEV.*

Luk 16:31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

143. Trespass and Repentance Luke 17: 1 - 4

Luk 17:1 Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! Luk 17:2 It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. Luk 17:3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. Luk 17:4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

There are offences and there are offences. There are offences against man and there are offences against God and there are those who offend the Gospel. There are people who give offence and there are people who take offence, and there are people who are offended easily and others who just shrug off the offence.

In Matthews Gospel, it speaks of people who are sinned against, *Mat 18:15 Moreover if thy brother **shall trespass against** thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. Mat 18:16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. Mat 18:17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*

The word translated “trespass” is the Greek word for sin, ἁμαρτάνω, and so the person getting offended better make sure that they are sinned against, before they get on their crusade to have a perceived wrong righted. In fact most of these offences turn out to be nothing more than a clash of personalities, not sin, but they are not brought to the resolution that Jesus suggests, and are an occasion for prolonged bitterness, which leads to more serious problems.

The fact that a person will elevate something that they have been offended by, above their own offences, which they commit against God, offences which they surely commit daily, and of which they themselves are guilty, is an amazing show of absolute Pharisaism and hypocrisy. The guilty crave an apology but are not willing to forgive others themselves, so they stand condemned themselves as sinners.

I am reminded of the story Jesus told about forgiveness, *Mat 18:23 This story will show you what the kingdom of heaven is like: One day a king decided to call in his officials and ask them to give an account of what they owed him. Mat 18:24 As he was doing this, one official was brought in who owed him fifty million silver coins. Mat 18:25 But he didn't have any money to pay what he owed. The king ordered him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all he owned, in order to pay the debt. Mat 18:26 The official got down on his knees and began begging, "Have pity on me, and I will pay you every cent I owe!" Mat 18:27 The king felt sorry for him and let him go free. He even told the official that he did not have to pay back the money. Mat 18:28 As the official was leaving, he happened to meet another official, who owed him a hundred silver coins. So he grabbed the man by the throat. He started choking him and said, "Pay me what you owe!" Mat 18:29 The man got down on his knees and began begging, "Have pity on me, and I will pay you back." Mat 18:30 But the first official refused to have pity. Instead, he went and had the other official put in jail until he could pay*

what he owed. Mat 18:31 When some other officials found out what had happened, they felt sorry for the man who had been put in jail. Then they told the king what had happened. Mat 18:32 The king called the first official back in and said, "You're an evil man! When you begged for mercy, I said you did not have to pay back a cent. Mat 18:33 Don't you think you should show pity to someone else, as I did to you?" Mat 18:34 The king was so angry that he ordered the official to be tortured until he could pay back everything he owed. CEV.

The moral is, if you want to be forgiven, you must forgive, and if you want mercy you must show mercy. But what are all these petty squabbles about and do they amount to a hill of beans compared with the offences that men mete out daily to Christ. Our little offences, occasioned by our pride and self righteousness, are as nothing compared to offending Jesus, and we should be ashamed that we ever raise them, and that they should ever take up our time, compared to the weightier matters of Christ. We jump about saying, "look at me, I have been offended", and Christ cannot be seen because your grief is more important than what He says. And when Christ says you should love one another, it means you love everyone except the one who offends you, and by this you make yourself more important than the Law giver of the Universe.

The words of Matthew chapter 18 were written under the Old Testament, and if I see a hard heart there, it is because the Spirit has not yet been given. It is the same hard heart that was found in the disciples, *Mat 19:8 He saith unto them, Moses **because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you** to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.* If you are sinned against, then take it without taking it personally. If it happens 7 times in a day, forgive him, 7 times in a day, day after day, if he asks you to forgive him.

Jesus told us to forgive others but we don't really because we treasure matters in our heart. I recall some 30 years ago being on a course called "Working with People". We were discussing something called "cashing the brown stamps". It referred to a method of buying things with trading stamps, and this referred to an American brand of stamps, brown stamps.

The Black and Brown Trading Stamp Corporation was established in 1969 in Oakland, California by former Oakland Raiders football player Art Powell, who saw an opportunity to create and reward loyalty within the Black community, through trading stamps featuring Black American icons. The first and only icon featured on these stamps was James Brown, which reflects the fact that James Brown put up most of the money to start the company. The stamps were issued by Black merchants in Downtown Oakland to provide incentives to local patrons in the Black community. A full book of 50 pages of stamps was worth the equivalent of \$3.00 in merchandise. During the first year the effort grew to include 1,000 merchants across California and generated over \$1 million dollars in business.

People saved up the stamps until they had enough to make it worthwhile cashing them in. It was noted that people behave the same way with grudges, they store them up, and a grudge might not be worth much, but a book of grudges is worth something. It explained why wives suddenly went berserk at their inconsiderate husband for doing some minor infringement of house rules, like “thou shalt put the toilet seat lid down after using the loo”. What caused the sudden outburst and a string of “you don’ts”, mounting up to a “full book” of complaints, and then to suddenly pour forth. She was just cashing the brown stamps. None of the misdemeanours was ever dealt with or forgiven, but stored up in the heart and released as a flood. And that is how we behave without Christ.

Jesus says, *Luk 17:1 Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!* An offence is σκάνδαλον = skandalon, or a “scandal”, it is a gin trap, snare or stumbling-block. It is believed that “gin” comes from the word **engine**, meaning a device that did not require human intervention to make it work.

But offences against whom or caused by what? It is clearly against the “little ones”, *Luk 17:2 It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend **one of these little ones**.* Matthew supplies some more detail, although he is not necessarily speaking when Luke records his story, *Mat 18:1 At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? Mat 18:2 And Jesus called **a little child** unto him, and set him in the midst of them, Mat 18:3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Mat 18:4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Mat 18:5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. Mat 18:6 But **whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.***

It is clear that our Lord is speaking of children who are the “little ones”, and further detail is given by Mark. *Mar 9:42 And whosoever shall offend one of these **little ones that believe in me**, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.* The little ones are children who believe in Christ.

Why are the children singled out for mention, surely an offence against adult is the same as an offence to a child? Perhaps it is because they are not equipped to argue against an adult, and they are bound by custom to do what the adult tells them, and they will believe what they are told. Jesus is warning that the

overbearing ways of the elders was being watched by Him, and children were as important to Him as adults.

It is also a reminder that people who believe in Jesus should have a child like faith, *Mat 18:3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Mat 18:4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.* I did not say “a childish” faith but a child like trust, a faith uncomplicated by the intellect of man, by the reasoning of man. A faith that is not marked with

grand ideas couched in high flown words, obscure phrases, a language only known by the illuminati, people claiming to possess special enlightenment or knowledge of something. A faith that does not examine why it failed but why it can succeed, not things that cannot be done but things which can be done.

Who was the greatest disciple? *Luk 9:46 Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. Luk 9:47 And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, Luk 9:48 And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.* It was the child, not the old men or the young men. It was not the person who thought they were worthy, but the child who was only concerned to follow. Why don't we follow the child's example? Because, unlike the child, we want positions of greatness.

Jesus is telling His disciples that they had better watch out that they do not cause a child to stumble, thinking that they are doing the Lord's business, but did they learn the lesson? No they did not, *Luk 18:15 And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, **they rebuked them.** Luk 18:16 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Luk 18:17 Verily I say unto you, **Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.*** The disciples still went on their way heedless and later they have this rebuke from Jesus.

Jesus sees these young minds as fertile ground for the Gospel, but they are so easily impressed and led astray and imprinted with all the falsehood that is not of Christ and at the same time is anti-Christ. I know this from my own experience. As a child I had a fear of death but my parents did not take the time to explain the truth about death, because they did not know the truth, none the less they dismissed it with a laugh. They sent me to a Sunday School to make me good, but they didn't go themselves, and what was taught in Sunday School was undermined by their non Christian behaviour when I came home. The discipline at home was inconsistent with the Christ like discipline, which brings us to Him,

and it only served to impress on a young mind, that God wasn't very nice, except at Christmas and possibly Easter, where the Crucifixion was overshadowed by a giant Easter egg.

The religious people, the leaders, the professionals, didn't seem to notice us children. But we looked at them and we thought they were good, because they were called "reverend" and they dressed in mystical magical clothes, and wore white collars and did all sorts of rituals and genuflections in special buildings, where God lived, except nobody had seen God there for years. But that is what the grownups believed and told us was true, and who were we to argue with them, because we were small people and did not understand.

In doing this they led us gently away from the Saviour. And if these people should come up telling us that they have found Christ, then let them first get rid of all the inventions of man, the things which obscure Christ, and have some honesty in their miserable lives, because if they lie over the things which can be seen, they most certainly lie over the things which they cannot see. These and many other things were stumbling block to me. When I finally turned to Christ I found it hard to trust anyone.

This stumbling block is caused by a whole array of ideas, which may not intentionally be designed to lead you away from Christ, but they do anyway. As Mahatma Gandhi said, "I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ." The so called "Christian" can be a stumbling block to the young and to the old, and they must get behind Christ and throw out absolutely everything that is not of Christ. If they stumble at Christ that is because they are lost, *1Pe 2:8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.*

There is one more thing to note about the one causing stumbling, *Luk 17:2 It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.* Jesus thinks that the people who are a cause of stumbling ought to be hung with a millstone and thrown in the sea to drown. That's pretty severe and it shows how He feels about causing stumbling.

Is it fair? Jesus is expressing how He feels about people, you and me, those people who cause others to stumble. Those people who misrepresent Him, His ministry, what He said, everything about Him He has revealed in His Word, and by this cause others to stumble. They are worthless individuals who deserve drowning like a dog.

A person leading someone astray is drowning them in error, smothering them, and taking the breath of God away from them. The fitting punishment for them is that they should undergo the same.

144. Increasing Faith *Luke 17: 5 - 6*

Luk 17:5 And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. Luk 17:6 And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.

We have covered some of the aspects of faith but not really said what faith is or where it comes from. We saw in the Centurion a great faith, yes a greater faith than could be found in the nation of Israel that was given the oracles of God. In chapter 50 of this series (The Gentile with more faith than Israel Luke 7: 1 - 10) we saw,

The story is about a Centurion, a captain of about 100 men, who beseeches Jesus to spare his servants life. His simple plea is based upon his understanding of an ordered universe, a universe with meaning that understands when it is spoken to appropriately, a universe with an order which he recognises and appeals to. He is used to giving orders that are obeyed and so he appeals to Jesus as one who he recognises has even greater authority.

The Centurion had faith but not in himself, it was in the person of Jesus. This was confirmed in the post-Transfiguration story chapter 74 of this series (Faith in what or who Luke 9: 37 - 42) where we explored this **objective faith**,

The simple answer was that He, Jesus, was up the mountain and they were below and He was not with them. **The lack of faith is the lack of Jesus**, *Joh 15:4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. Joh 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: **for without me ye can do nothing.***

This is faith which we might call **objective faith** as opposed to **quantitative faith**. For example, *Heb 11:6 But without **faith** it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must **believe** that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* The object of faith is God and we must believe in Him. Faith and belief

come from the same word, πίστις = pistis = faith, and πιστεύω = pisteuō = to believe. One is the noun the other is the verb of the same root. To believe is to exercise faith, and that must have the person of Jesus as the object before our eyes, "**for without me ye can do nothing**".

The faith of the disciples was faith in Jesus, "**for without me ye can do nothing**". People think that they can, of themselves, out of their own person, conjure up "faith". That faith does not become a "stand alone" part of man, independent of God, so that we say, "I have my own faith". We look at the disciples, of whom Jesus says, *Luk 12:28 If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, **O ye of little faith**?* And we say of those "little faiths", surely they cannot be little in faith if they have been with Jesus, but they are because their faith did not fully embrace Jesus.

They all continue to have their doubts about Him, who He was, what He had come for, and most of these doubts persist until after the resurrection, *Luk 9:43 And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, Luk 9:44 Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men. Luk 9:45 But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.....Joh 12:16 These things understood not his disciples at the first: but **when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they** that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.*

Their faith, their belief, was not totally in the person of Christ, and this was because they had an imperfect understanding of His person.

Why would you want your faith increased? It was probably because their understanding of faith was wrong? If they had thought that faith was like an organ of the body, and grew naturally, that increased in size if you worked it, like a muscle, a bicep, and they had looked at their scrawny bodies of faith, and said, I want to be able to look like Mr Universe of faith, give me more faith please, but they had the wrong idea of faith. They wanted the protein shake of faith to make them "muscular Christians", they wanted a quick fix that would give them faith without any effort on their part. They wanted faith without effort, they wanted faith without works, and they wanted faith without Jesus.

Jesus answers them by an illustration of faith, but He did not answer the question on how to increase faith. He doesn't say to them, look, if you want more faith, this is what you do. He doesn't say, if you want to increase in faith, you have to become more holy, or you have got to do these works, or you have to be more charitable, or you have got to go to church more, or you have to pray more.

Jesus does not hand them a “Dummies guide to Faith”, as if that would solve their problem. Jesus does not tell them to do these things and He doesn’t tell them how to increase their faith either.

Jesus merely says, “*If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed*”, and in telling them this, He is telling them that contrary to their expectation, He doesn’t dole out faith on request, but if they had a small amount of faith, it could work wonders. Well, it’s all right telling me a small amount of faith does wonders, but how do I get it? Where does the faith the size of a mustard seed come from, and can you give it to me?

Remember what we said earlier, “*for without me ye can do nothing*” and that is in my opinion the same as, “without me **you are nothing**”. Faith only functions if you are in Jesus. Faith is faith in Jesus, to do whatever Jesus wants you to do, and if you want more faith then what is it for, your works or Jesus works? *Php 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.* Jesus is telling the Apostles, you do not need big faith to do anything, because I will supply all the faith you need, and faith the size of a mustard grain can move mountains, *Mat 21:21 Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done, Mat 21:22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.* It is ALL in His Name, never in your name, never your faith, and that is why there is no answer to the question that they asked, *Luk 17:5 And the apostles said unto the Lord, **Increase our faith.***

I can illustrate the ephemeral, the transitory nature of faith, by the way Jesus was deserted, and that faith is not something that we possess independently of Jesus, *Joh 6:65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. Joh 6:66 From **that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.** Joh 6:67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Joh 6:68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. Joh 6:69 And **we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.***

The disciples that walked away from Jesus did not believe that He was the Son of the living God. They had no permanent faith in Jesus, only transient faith, and they did not trust Him and they did not believe in Him. Therefore, whatever faith that they possessed, up to that point in time, that enabled them to follow Him, was gone and it was sucked out of them in that moment. They no longer “possessed” the faith in Jesus and because they had denied Him, He took it back. And that is how I believe that a man can lose his faith, because **it was only there as long as Jesus was there.**

Using another analogy, and this time one that submariners will know all too well, concerns the BIBS system, which is an acronym for “Built in Breathing System”. This is an air supply that the submariner can tap into, if the compartment he is in has flooded or the air quality is becoming foul. It consists of a ring main of air supply valves and each submariner plugs his individual demand valve into the supply and can start breathing fresh air. All of the sailors in the compartment can breathe through their own individual umbilical, but they are breathing off of one supply.

This is an analogy for faith in Christ. We draw the pure air of faith when we are linked to Him by that umbilical that sends us His life. We are drawing life from Him and it is how we can be said to be seated in the heavenlies, *Eph 2:6 And hath raised us up together, and made us **sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus***: We are in Heaven with Christ as long as we are linked to Him. When and for whatever reason, sin, the pleasures of the world, the cares of the world, come along, then we deliberately cut that life line. We can deceive ourselves that what we are doing is fine but the reality is a loss of fellowship and a loss of Jesus, and if we continue in that condition long enough we shall die.

Taking the analogy further, its not just me getting faith through the divine “BIBS” system, its all the other believers who have plugged their umbilical’s into to Him that get a like faith from Him, *2Pe 1:1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained **like precious faith** with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*: We are all drawing from the same source. That is why we are coming to a unity of the spirit, *Eph 4:13 Till we all come in **the unity of the faith**, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*:

The result of believers having this single supply of life in Christ, is that they will all believe the same thing, *2Co 4:13 **We having the same spirit of faith**, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; **we also believe, and therefore speak***; The believers may have come on different roads, but they all come to the same place, and they have the same experience of Christ, and they all speak the same language of faith in Christ, *Phm 1:6 That the **communication of thy faith** may become effectual by the acknowledging of **every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus***.

It is by this umbilical to Christ that we have the ability to accomplish anything, *Php 4:13 I **can do all things through Christ** which strengtheneth me*. It is by this umbilical that we are nourished spiritually and drawing from this strength we produce fruit, *Joh 15:1 Jesus said to his disciples: I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. Joh 15:2 He cuts away every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit. But he trims clean every branch that does produce fruit, so that it will produce even more fruit. Joh 15:3 You are already clean because of what I*

have said to you. *Joh 15:4 Stay **joined to me, and I will stay joined to you. Just as a branch cannot produce fruit unless it stays joined to the vine, you cannot produce fruit unless you stay joined to me.** Joh 15:5 I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you stay joined to me, and I stay joined to you, then you will produce lots of fruit. But you cannot do anything without me.*

How do you connect with Christ, get the divine umbilical to draw down strength? I think that it is by our total commitment to Christ, forsaking all, *Joh 12:25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. Joh 12:26 If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.* If we do not forsake all, we cannot be truly connected to Christ, *Luk 14:25 And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, Luk 14:26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Luk 14:27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*

The faith in Christ comes from hearing his word, and acting upon it and if you want to hear what His word is, read your Bible. A lot of people seem to have continual instructions from Jesus, and maybe they do, but they will not contradict His written testimony if they do get them, *Rom 10:15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! Rom 10:16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? Rom 10:17 So then **faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.***

Paul, some 20 or 30 years after the crucifixion, puts it in the scripture, which tells us how we might increase our faith, and that is by increasing our knowledge of the word of God. I do not think this is just learning scripture, marking your Bible with favourite texts underlined, and this is not what I think that this text means. It means stringing them together as a meaningful whole, thereby seeing the full Council of God. Faith can then stream in to our dead souls.

What joins us to Christ, what is that umbilical? It is the Holy Spirit, *Joh 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* Faith is **NOT** independent of Christ.

145. Serving Him *Luke 17: 7 -10*

Luk 17:7 But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? Luk 17:8 And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Luk 17:9 Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. Luk 17:10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

In case you had thought from the last ministry, that all you had to do was latch on to Jesus and leech Him dry you are wrong. We have seen the means and ability to serve Christ and now we come to the service to Christ. The service to Christ takes precedence over our desires of the flesh and He illustrates it with a farming analogy.

The servant in this story is working for a master who expects service and I take the analogy of servant/master to refer to the disciple/Jesus relationship. You might ask me what is the purpose of the master asking the servant to do anything, after all, if Christ wants anything done He can do it so much better than a flawed creature? He doesn't need man to get things done, and we might well ask the question with the psalmist, *Psa 8:4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?* After all, man is such hard work and you would be better off without him.

God is mindful of man and there is a reason given in that Psalm, *Psa 8:4 what is a mortal that you remember him or the Son of Man that you take care of him? Psa 8:5 You have made him a little lower than yourself. You have crowned him with glory and honor. Psa 8:6 You **have made him rule what your hands created**. You have put everything under his control: Psa 8:7 all the sheep and cattle, the wild animals, Psa 8:8 the birds, the fish, whatever swims in the currents of the seas. Psa 8:9 O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name throughout the earth! GW.*

The creation was put under man's supervision in what some have called "The Creation Mandate", others call it the "Cultural Mandate", *Gen 1:27 So **God created man in his own image**, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. Gen 1:28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and **subdue it**: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*

This tells us that God created man in His image and empowered him as his vicegerent, the person to administer the earth in His place. That is what God did and He was prepared for all that it involved, so man was a necessary

“somebody” to deal with the problems of life, as a servant under Christ. Man was God's first choice to run things in the temporal sphere and in the spiritual sphere, *2Co 10:3 We live in this world, but we don't act like its people 2Co 10:4 or fight our battles with the weapons of this world. **Instead, we use God's power that can destroy fortresses. We destroy arguments** 2Co 10:5 and every bit of pride that keeps anyone from knowing God. We capture people's thoughts and make them obey Christ.*

The Creation/Cultural mandate has through the fall of man and through the Gospel of redemption now put in man's hands, the task of redemption, *Mat 28:18 Jesus came to them and said: I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth! Mat 28:19 **Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples.** Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Mat 28:20 and teach them to do everything I have told you. I will be with you always, even until the end of the world.* Man failed in Eden but he has the chance to put things right.

There is no cessation from the task given by the Master Jesus. He offers no leisure from service, no holidays and their self indulgences to recharge your batteries, no respite, no retreats, only service. In this life there is no rest for the righteous. It seems strange to us selfish beings that have in this generation relegated religion to a few hours on one day a week, instead of Christ's service as full time. We only thought that people who were given to lead had that sort of commitment, but that is not so. As far as your time goes, there is no them and us, no professional class of religious people and the others who listen to them, we are all equal as far as duty goes, we all have an allocation of time and an hour for one is the same as an hour for the other. We are all servants and John Wesley knew this better than most people.

What would you do differently if this was your last day on earth?

Once John Wesley was asked what he would do if he knew this was his last day on earth. He replied, “At 4 o'clock I would have some tea. At 6 I would visit Mrs. Brown in the hospital. Then at 7:30 I would conduct a mid-week prayer service. At 10 I would go to bed and would wake up in glory.”

When Luther was asked what he would do on the day of Jesus' return, he said he would go out and plant a tree. Our Scripture text tells us that Christ expects each of us to be about our work so that when He comes, He will find us in gainful and constructive employment, taking care of the world as His trustees.

Some years ago a tourist visited the Castle Villa Asconti on the shores of Lake Como in northern Italy. Only the old gardener opened the gates and the visitor stepped into the garden, which was perfectly

kept. The visitor asked when the owner was last there. He was told, "Twelve years ago." Did he ever write? No. Where did he get instructions? From his agent in Milan. Does the master ever come? No. "But you keep the grounds as though your master were coming back tomorrow." The old gardener quickly replied, "Today, sir, today." A Christian watches and works as though Jesus Christ, the Master, would return this very day. He wants Jesus to find him or her busy about his or her tasks: washing dishes, mending shoes, running a store, teaching school, planting a rose bush. Jesus will be pleased to see His faithful ones working hard to build a better world, a more Christian society.

Well, that last bit is a somewhat idealistic, but Luther is on track and the gardener is on base. They are found doing what they are supposed to do for Jesus when He comes at the end, to raise the dead or when He comes at the end of our life. He expects us to be faithful and the primary focus of our concern is Him, *Luk 17:7 But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? Luk 17:8 And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?*

Is Christianity self-serving or is it Christ serving? Look at where the emphasis of contemporary religion is, the primary goal of every church is to influence the community for the better, provide a warm place of fellowship, sponsor excellent teaching, and even to survive, so they say. One of the "7000" who hasn't bowed the knee wrote on his website, James Miller.

(<https://solitaryroad.com/a1077.html>),

The primary focus of Christianity should be on the importance of loving God and being obedient to him. It is that simple. Christianity is simple, not complicated. One obeys God by focusing on the teachings of Jesus and trying to implement them in his own life. Jesus taught peacefulness, forgiveness, patience, humility, truthfulness, morality, chastity, treating others fairly and justly, not doing wrong to others, helping the poor and needy, etc. Model your conduct after Jesus. The reality and power of Christianity lies in its practice.

Distrust preachers, churches, and denominations. Distrust complicated theology and dogma. Distrust religious cant, great sounding slogans, and simplistic formulas. You cannot mass produce Christians by formulas and ritualistic practice. True Christianity is a very personal thing. It is about a personal love of God and a life of faith that results in clean, upright, godly living. Cut and dried formulas, ritualistic routines,

etc. are not Christianity and, unaccompanied by true faith and practice, are a road to hell.

Preachers, churches and denominations are very dangerous. They will take you down the wrong road, brainwash you, mess up your mind. Stay away from them. Read the Bible and keep Common Sense as your constant companion.

Distrust theologians. Distrust the mind of man. Egg headed men are very capable of engaging in complicated and obscure arguments that produce high error and great foolishness. With great and complicated arguments and much complicated terminology they prove that two plus two equals five. Theological schools mass produce ministers with programmed minds, minds that have been shaped and bent to some particular erroneous dogma and belief system.

God does not ask us to make clones of our sinful nature, making man after our image, but directing them to God to make the transformation. Jesus took His disciples to the cross and beyond to the Kingdom of God, not to the kingdom of man, *Mat 28:19 Go to the people of all nations and **make them my disciples**. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Mat 28:20 and teach them to do everything I have told you. I will be with you always, even until the end of the world.* CEV. Discipleship is the key element of this work. Yes that's it, make them **MY** disciples.

Were you expecting Jesus' thanks for doing your duty? *Luk 17:9 Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.* Who are you working for and why, who is the boss and what are you getting out of the relationship and what is He getting out of it? Have we forgotten in our rush to be saved that it was Him who died for us and we think so little of it that we only thank Him once, not every waking moments of every new day. We sing of the wonderful salvation but we do not know much about it and we do not even bother to find out about that salvation. We dance and pray and sing to Him as our best friend but when the noise has died down we forget and wander back to our miserable lives. We treat Jesus as an extension of our lives, not us as servants of Him.

And if I am wrong in what I say, why is it that so many of the people who know Him, who say know Jesus, know so little about Him? After years in the faith, if they are even in it, they remain stunted and ignorant. Is that any way to show gratitude? To know so little about the person we claim has saved us is a dereliction of duty.

So when the Master turns around and expects those servants to serve Him, we are a little shocked. We have to get up out of our seats, get our feet off of the

sofa and stop lounging about and above all reassess our relationship to the Lord Jesus. We are not equals with Him and should not have that familiarity which comes of ignorance. We must jump to attention and react immediately to the Master. He is in charge.

And if you are thinking that this Christianity, which I am advocating, is too strict, too Old Testament, and that Jesus has brought us a happy clappy Christianity, then take note of this verse, *Luk 17:10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.* **I notice that Jesus never gives a thank you to a single man.** Even the woman who did a kindness to Him preparing for His death did not get thanked, *Mar 14:8 She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Mar 14:9 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.*

Jesus thanks no man, for they “*have done that which was our duty to do*”. But He does thank the Father, *Luk 10:21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.* He breaks bread and thanks the Father but never thanks man for bread although the man might have made it.

I notice that as well as not thanking men, Jesus never apologises to man. He is so far above man, that the Master never thanks or apologises to the servant. Only when all is done and finished can the servant receive some gratitude. *Mat 25:23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.* That is when the labours of the saint are complete and then they can rest, *Rev 6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: Rev 6:10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? Rev 6:11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, **that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.***

While they are on earth, they are all of them, the pope, the archbishops, the vicars, the pastors, the least in the congregation, all of them, unprofitable, *Luk 17:10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, **We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.*** They are not thanked and they are all called unprofitable servants.

Who calls them that, who says that they are unprofitable servant? They themselves do. They are to chant the mantra, “**we are unprofitable, we are unprofitable**”, just as the leper went about crying, “unclean, unclean”, and that is something we should never forget. We should not forget where the unprofitable servant goes if they forget all that we have spoken of, *Mat 25:30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

146. Nine Corpses *Luke 17: 11 - 19*

Luk 17:11 And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Luk 17:12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: Luk 17:13 And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. Luk 17:14 And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. Luk 17:15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, Luk 17:16 And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. Luk 17:17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? Luk 17:18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. Luk 17:19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

Our Lord continues on His way to Jerusalem for the final act of His Ministry, and He has been on His way since the events of Luke chapter 9 and the journey continues until Luke chapter 19 verse 58. It's not quite clear where this healing of the lepers takes place, but the one man who turned back after he saw that he was healed was a Samaritan, so that this healing might have taken place in the borders of Samaria. In fact there might have been more than one Samaritan healed of the ten, as the disparate huddle of Jews and Samaritans came to the Lord.

Ten unclean, possibly disfigured, certainly outcast men, desperate because of the way society treated them, poor souls, met Jesus, *Luk 17:12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: Luk 17:13 And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.* Did they recognise the power of Jesus when they cried to Jesus for mercy or did they say that to everyone? They may have been sincere or they may have just thought, “it’s worth a try”, any “passing ship”, anything is worth a try to be rid of this disease.

These men did not know much about Jesus, perhaps only from hearsay and anecdotes, because they could not have been among those people in the villages and towns, in which the disciples preached the Gospel, for they were social outcasts. They stood at the edge of the towns, “afar off”, and because

they were unclean they were kept apart from all social contact, and they had an imperfect knowledge about Jesus. But Jesus does not cut them off, or go around them, He saves all.

There was a word about their condition in the Bible, *Lev 13:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, saying, Lev 13:2 When a man shall have in the skin of his flesh a rising, a scab, or bright spot, and it be in the skin of his flesh like the plague of leprosy; then he shall be brought unto Aaron the priest, or unto one of his sons the priests:* Of all the diseases, this one alone stood out as needing the oversight of the priest in diagnosing it. It therefore has a spiritual meaning as well as a physical effect.

I think that leprosy is analogous to pride, *2Ch 26:16 But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense. 2Ch 26:17 And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, that were valiant men: 2Ch 26:18 And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God. 2Ch 26:19 Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar.*

Of all the deadly sins, pride also known as hubris (from Ancient Greek ὕβρις) or futility, is considered the original and worst of the seven deadly sins on almost every list, the most demonic. To what extent we may attribute pride to these lepers, or pride in consideration of the text, is not made clear. But they were thankless, except for one.

The miracle is strange, because in response to their request, Jesus tells them, *"shew yourselves unto the priests"*, and the miracle happened when they obeyed Jesus, *"that, as they went, they were cleansed"*. No command was given to the leprosy to depart, no touch from Jesus hand, no statement that if they believed they would be healed, no request from them that they be made clean, just Jesus words, *"shew yourselves unto the priests"*. It is not like the leper asking to be cleansed, *Mat 8:2 And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. Mat 8:3 And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, **I will; be thou clean.** And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* I could have said that, "Go to the priest", but I am certainly not a healer so what is this miracle about?

I am not certain that the ten lepers were cleansed in that instant, because it required the faith to do what Jesus said they should do, and if they had stayed

put, I do not think that they would have been healed. It was doing what Jesus said that started them on the path of healing, and once they got moving the healing took place, *“as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God.*

Jesus does right by the Law of Moses, *Luk 17:14 And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.* They would have turned up, showing themselves to the priests, with the other lepers who had not been directly healed by Jesus, all going to these “experts”, the priests, to see if they were ritually clean and fit for temple service again. The priests too would have been amazed at the sight of so many lepers cleansed, and would have enquired of the men, “how come so many of you were cleansed on the same day?” The priests too would have been party to Jesus miracle.

Perhaps they were obedient to Jesus words, *“shew yourselves unto the priests”*, because that was the instruction given to them, and they had not asked for healing, they had only asked mercy. This was a compassionate act from Jesus, an act of mercy. The word mercy = ἐλεέω, to have compassion (pity on) and alms = ἐλεημοσύνη, have the same root. What the lepers were expecting from Jesus is not clear, and so they might have expected some act of kindness, some gift or alms, and Jesus tells them to show themselves to the priest, and they thought, well let’s do that because we might just get something off of them. Perhaps they were not expecting Jesus to heal them but just some kindly act or advice.

This healing came as a total surprise and that is shown by the reaction of one of the lepers, *Luk 17:15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God.* Try to imagine that desperate leper, going and doing as Jesus had said to him, to see the priests, and suddenly, on his way, he glances down and looks at his hands and they are totally normal. He stops in amazement, lifts his skirt and sees his legs are free from disease, he rips his shirt open and sees his chest totally clear and whole. In those moments of joy, confusion of thought, exhilaration, the man shouts out his praise to God, and he turns back from his way to thank the Lord for his unexpected healing.

As he approaches Jesus, He falls on his face before Him, *Luk 17:16 And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.* He worshipped Jesus as the healer and as God, for no man worships man.

But I am left wondering, why did **the Samaritan** have to go to a Jewish priest, to a priesthood led by Sadducees who do not believe in the resurrection, in a Temple that was not built under the direction of God but built by someone who tried to murder the Messiah at birth and to the nation of Jews who had nothing to do with Samaritans? *Joh 4:9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it*

*that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for **the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.***

What was Jesus doing sending the man who had been healed, to an unbelieving priest, who ministered in a Temple built by an unbeliever? Was He getting them to conform to the Law of Moses, to fulfil all righteousness, and not the broken down priestly system? But the man turned back when he was cleansed and found Jesus, not the Jewish priests, and so do we see this as confirmation of Jesus priesthood over the Jewish priesthood?

We, with our “Christian” hats on, do not see the events unfolding culturally as they did in those times, and the culture of the Jews and the culture of the Samaritans were subtly different. The fact that Jesus appeared more like a Samaritan than a Jew on occasion, to the Jews was upsetting, *Joh 8:48 Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that **thou art a Samaritan**, and hast a devil? Joh 8:49 Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me.*

Was the Samaritan priesthood superior to the Jewish priesthood? If you were a Samaritan it was, but if you were as Jew it was not, *Joh 4:20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Joh 4:21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Joh 4:22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: **for salvation is of the Jews.** Joh 4:23 But the hour cometh, **and now is**, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. Joh 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

This is the closest Jesus comes to being partisan about the Jews. They are the people who own salvation. But He does say, “*But the hour cometh, **and now is**, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth*”, implying that neither Jew nor Samaritan worshipped God in truth. There are a lot of issues going on here, and did this man go to a Samaritan or Jewish priest to be acknowledged as clean, or did he go at all? Questions and yet more questions.

Of course, gratitude goes out of the window as soon as your prayer is answered. You hear people pray for a thing, but seldom a prayer of thanksgiving for the same thing delivered. In this instance, one comes back to thank Jesus, and what we do know is that 10 people asked for mercy, and they were all shown mercy but only one was saved. The word used in the text for “your faith has made you **whole**”, is better translated “save”, as it is in Luke, *Luk 7:50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath **saved** thee; go in peace.*

As if to make the point, Jesus says, *Luk 17:17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? Luk 17:18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.* One tenth returned to give thanks, and that is like the doctrine of the remnant, *Isa 6:12 And until the LORD has removed men far away, and the desolation in the midst of the land is great. Isa 6:13 But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return and be consumed like the terebinth and like the oak being felled, yet its stump remains; so the holy seed shall be its stump."* AFV. The grateful one, the one embracing Jesus, the one glorifying God with a loud voice, is the one who is saved.

It is therefore possible to be a recipient of God's mercy and not be saved. There are people who say all manner of things in Jesus name and are not saved, *Mat 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Mat 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, **Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?** and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? Mat 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, **I never knew you:** depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

Yes, you prophesied, yes, you have done many wonderful works, but Jesus never knew you, suggesting in truth, you never knew Him, despite your protestations to the contrary. It is possible that you have brushed against Jesus somewhere, have had some religious experience, have even thought that you must be saved, but by your ingratitude, you are not known to Him. You are like those 9 lepers who answered a call and did not return to give thanks and so not known by Him.

Nine freshly cleansed corpses, bereft of eternal life, obedient to the earthly but doomed as far as Heaven. No mention of faith saving the nine only faith saving the one. *Luk 17:19 And he said to him, "Get up and go your way. Your faith has saved you."* LEB. The 9 were cleansed but only one was saved.

147. Where is the Kingdom? Luke 17: 20 - 24

Luk 17:20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Luk 17:21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. Luk 17:22 And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. Luk 17:23 And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. Luk 17:24 For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.

The language is too harsh and should probably not be “demanded” as of a ransom, but that the Pharisees “asked” Him or questioned Him. What was the question? It was, “*when the kingdom of God should come*”. That is a loaded question and as we shall see, the Kingdom does not come in any apocalyptic, earth shaking, physical way, because it is here already, “***the kingdom of God is within you***”.

So, am I saying that the Lord is not going to make a physical return? **No**, I am not, *Act 1:9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. Act 1:10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Act 1:11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.* There is a difference between “Heaven, the Kingdom of Heaven, Kingdom of God” and the “coming of the Son of Man”.

I want to explore this, because those Jews had an expectation of a Kingdom, from John the Baptist, and from Daniel, *Dan 7:13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. Dan 7:14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*

Starting before the beginning, before the Creation, we have a definitive statement, *Psa 90:1 O Lord, you have always been our home. Psa 90:2 Before you created the hills or brought the world into being, you were eternally God, and will be God forever.* Man was created to dwell with and under God.

God was the creator of man and man was His servant, bound by a tie of obedience and subservience to Him. God was the chief King, *Rev 19:13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. Rev 19:14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. Rev 19:15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. Rev 19:16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

The pre-flood history of man is very sparse. A few thousand years pass with little comment on the development of mankind after the fall, and it is the dark ages of Scripture, *Gen 6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Gen 6:6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the*

earth, and it grieved him at his heart. Thus ends mankind except for a very small remnant.

After the flood God sets His eye upon Abraham, the father of nations and from him came Israel, and from Israel came the kings of Israel. As far back as Deuteronomy, a kingship was predicted, *Deu 17:14 When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; Deu 17:15 **Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose:** one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.* However, it was never fully realised due to man's sin, although the choice of king was up to God, the ultimate kingmaker and ruler.

The kings of men came about in the time of Samuel, through a rebellion, and the first was Saul, but it came at the cost of the rejection of God, *1Sa 8:5 And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. 1Sa 8:6 But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. 1Sa 8:7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, **but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.***

This makes it absolutely clear, that the earthly kings were a rejection of the Lordship or Kingship of Jehovah. Up to this time, God was King over His chosen people, He reigned over them, but now He is cast aside. This is further proof, if it were needed that God was always the King. The Scriptures record how the Lord went about establishing His kingship again, prophesying of it, especially in Daniel, *Dan 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall **the God of heaven set up a kingdom,** which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, **and it shall stand for ever.** Dan 2:45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that **the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands,** and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.*

The triumph of God's Kingdom is sealed in the book of Revelation, *Rev 11:15 And the seventh angel trumpeted. And there were great voices in Heaven, saying, **The kingdoms of the world became our Lord's, even of His Christ;** and He shall reign to the ages of the ages.* I say again, God was always King and He goes about establishing it, as history completes itself.

So, the Pharisees were quite correct to expect the coming of the kingdom of God, but Jesus corrects their understanding as to what it is. The kingdom is not merely

an external thing, where a people have a ruler, a king, and the state of the heart of that people is indifferent or contrary to the king. The heart of the people must be with the king, supporting him, fighting for him, and laying their lives down for him. The people must be at one with their king and this is seen in the strict rules of discipleship, *Luk 14:26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also he cannot be my disciple. Luk 14:27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*

Total commitment is demanded to King Jesus in this life and the next, and we also see that the Kingdom is not based upon earth, *Joh 18:35 Pilate answered, am I a Jew? Your nation, even the chief priests, delivered You up to me! What did You do? Joh 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would have fought that I might not be delivered up to the Jews. But now **My kingdom is not from here.*** It is not an earthly kingdom.

It is not viewed with earthly eyes, but is known with spiritual eyes, *Joh 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, **he cannot see the kingdom of God.*** The Kingdom of God is a reality, it is on earth and heaven, hence it is called the Kingdom of Heaven, but it has no visible presence on earth except in the hearts of the faithful. It is seen by the person who is born from above, and as such is a spiritual kingdom, *Joh 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man **be born of water and of the Spirit,** he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Joh 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and **that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.***

Jesus can therefore say of His Kingship, His Kingdom, that, “**the kingdom of God is within you**”. If the kingdom is within you, what does that mean? It is in its entirety, the Kingship of Jesus over us, in time and space. Where Jesus is we are, where the Father is the Son is, and we live separately from the world. This kingdom is about the hidden things of life, the internals of life.

When did Jesus become King? He has always been King, *Mat 2:2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.* He is King, He was King and he is the coming King, *Heb 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.* The ruler of the universe. *Rev 19:16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.* From everlasting to everlasting, eternal King and not a footnote in history but the main show.

He enters our world to redeem the kingdom, *1Co 15:24 Then cometh the end, **when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God,** even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 1Co 15:25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.* Does it infer Christ is

not God because He delivers the Kingdom to God? No it does not. It means that He takes His rightful position as Lord, and having been “The Son”, He delivers to Himself, as The Father, the Kingdom, having fulfilled His role in redemption as The Son.

The Son is the worthy hero of the Divine plan, *Rev 5:9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; Rev 5:10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.*

The Kingdom of God, the invisible kingdom, does not come with observation, “*he answered them and said, **The kingdom of God cometh not with observation***”, observation = παρατήρησις (only here). I think it means that by watching for it coming, as if you set a man on the lookout for it, to be an observer for the coming of the Kingdom, it will not be seen. You can watch all you like but you will not see it come, because it comes like the Spirit, *Joh 3:7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. Joh 3:8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou **hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh**, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

That does not mean there is no change in the person who receives the Spirit, just that you cannot tell when it is going to occur, because it does not come by observation. There is a time Before Christ, (BC) enters your life and a time After Christ (AD) has entered your life. That is the so called “New Birth”, being “Born Again”, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, by the word of God.

What does it mean to be born of the Spirit? We all jump upon that biblical saying and make of it something that suits our experience. We interpret the Scripture from our experience and not our experience by the Scripture. We say, “I am a born again Christian”, and I am different because I have had an experience that others do not have, and that experience must be the New Birth. When pressed to show everyone has had the same experience, it becomes a little vague. Earthly birth however, is the same for everyone, and it is so much the same that it is given a date on which it occurs. We all know we were born, when we were born and where we were born, so that it can be recorded by a registrar as the exact date when we left the womb.

We do not have the same experience spiritually and I do not see that the “born again Christian”, has in every case the same experience, the same conviction, a precise time when they think that they came to Jesus. Some may have laboured long and hard, coming to Christ over the years, others may have had a “Pauline” flash conversion, and some do not even know when they arrived. It does not appear to be the same birth experience for everyone.

That might just be because we were led to expect something which was not written in Scripture and was only the interpretation of so called Gospel preachers. For those of us who are slaves to the AV and who do not dare to touch another version, let us see if we are being consistent in our translation. The phrase “born again” = γεννηθη ανωθεν, interprets the word again (ανωθεν) as meaning a second time, being born a second time. But does it mean this? This confuses the old teacher of Israel, *Joh 3:4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?*

Why the confusion? Nicodemus takes the word ανωθεν to mean a second time, “again”, but Jesus is using the word ανωθεν, to mean “from above”. It is an ambiguous word and has both meanings, but the crucial issue is “what is the meaning of Jesus?” If we see how ανωθεν is used we may be able to suggest how Jesus is using it.

It is translated “again” in Galatians, *Gal 4:9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire **again** to be in bondage?* But elsewhere it is translated “above” or from the top, *Mat 27:51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from **the top** to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;* In James “from above”, *Jas 3:15 This wisdom descendeth not from **above**, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.*

In John 3 it is translated “above”, *Joh 3:31 He that cometh from **above** is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.* It is clear here that Jesus is speaking of heaven, and why would He use a different meaning earlier on? I think that the message is clear and I will read as I think is the correct translation, from the CEV, *Joh 3:1 There was a man named Nicodemus who was a Pharisee and a Jewish leader. Joh 3:2 One night he went to Jesus and said, "Sir, we know that God has sent you to teach us. You could not work these miracles, unless God were with you." Joh 3:3 Jesus replied, "I tell you for certain **that you must be born from above** before you can see God's kingdom!" Joh 3:4 Nicodemus asked, "How can a grown man ever be born a second time?" Joh 3:5 Jesus answered: I tell you for certain that before you can get into God's kingdom, you must be born not only by water, but by the Spirit. Joh 3:6 Humans give life to their children. Yet only God's Spirit can change you into a child of God. Joh 3:7 Don't **be surprised when I say that you must be born from above.***

It is a work of God not of man and that is for sure. But where do you find it in the Old Testament, after all, Nicodemus was supposed to know about it as the teacher in Israel so it must have been in the Law? I will hazard a guess and suggest you will find the idea in Deuteronomy.

It is found in the circumcised heart, *Deu 10:15 Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. Deu 10:16 Circumcise **therefore the foreskin of your heart**, and be no more stiffnecked.* The people were told to do something impossible for them but it was not impossible to God, *Deu 30:5 And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. Deu 30:6 **And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul**, that thou mayest live.*

The people needed a new heart and God gave it to them, but when did He give it and how much of it was at once?

148. A Strange Birth Luke 17: 20 - 24

Luk 17:20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Luk 17:21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. Luk 17:22 And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. Luk 17:23 And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. Luk 17:24 For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. .

We continue to consider Jesus' words, "*the kingdom of God is within you*" and ask, when did God give man a new heart and was the change given all together at once? We began to look at the phrase, *Joh 3:3 Jesus replied, "I tell you for certain that **you must be born from above** before you can see God's kingdom!"*

There are a number of things that happens to a child of God when they come to Christ and they do not always happen at the same speed or in the same order for everyone. We must see in the activities of God, which He has given to men, that there is a considerable change required on our behalf. We come from a life of sin and self, to a new life of righteousness and service. Consistent with us claiming to have changed, there are numerous character changes which must follow and by this show the work of God in the heart. Here are some of them.

*Eph 4:22 That ye **put off concerning** the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; Eph 4:23 And be renewed **in***

the spirit of your mind; Eph 4:24 And that ye **put on the new man**, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Eph 4:25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.....

Col 3:5 **Mortify** therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: Col 3:6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: Col 3:7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. Col 3:8 But now ye also **put off** all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Col 3:9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have **put off the old man with his deeds**; Col 3:10 And have **put on the new man**, which is **renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him**:.....

Gal 5:19 Now **the works of the flesh** are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Gal 5:20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Gal 5:21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, **that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God**. Gal 5:22 But **the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Gal 5:23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. Gal 5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.Eph 5:3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Eph 5:4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. Eph 5:5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God..... Eph 5:9 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth ;) Eph 5:10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

You must be born from above, where God is seated and there is no entry into the kingdom if you have these fleshly sinful traits, no matter how much you protest "I have been born again", "of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, **that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God**". It is essential that you actually change, Rom 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. Rom 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: **but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind**, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

This is quite a list of virtues and vices, and remember, its just as important to put away the evil as it is to put on the good. The works of the flesh are contrasted

with the fruit of the spirit, so to be doing fleshly things, is not showing the work of the Spirit on the heart. Now do you expect all those necessary changes to occur instantaneously when one comes to Christ? And in addition there are the issues that Christ raises, things which make us more like Him, for example the beatitudes, love to enemies, not avenging yourself, not retaliating and so on.

We can start a relationship with Christ, we can strive to enter the narrow gate, but our pack of fleshly sins will hinder us, and the idea that we enter the narrow gate and get it behind us, and that we have become model citizens of the Kingdom from that day forward is not true. "Born Again" is seen as a one off event that it is in our past, like "Pooh sticks" it has been carried away in time, under the bridge. But if it is not a one off, and if "Born from above" is the meaning, it is telling us something else, and the time frame has shifted. If repentance is a one off event in our life, it is in our past, but if it is something that occurs many times, an attitude of repentance, it shows that we have a lot more to do.

Let us see if we can illustrate this from the life of Peter. When do you think that Peter was born from above, at the beginning when he first met Christ or much later? When he acted out of ignorance to save Christ and was called satan, was he born from above, *Mar 8:33 But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.* Or when he denied Christ and did the devils work, was he born from above, *Mar 14:30 And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. Mar 14:31 But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.*

Or when he cut off Malchus' ear with a sword, was he born from above? *Joh 18:10 Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.* Or when he contradicted God as regards the clean and unclean, was he born from above, *Act 10:13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. Act 10:14 But Peter said, **Not so, Lord;** for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.* Or when he dissembled with the Jews, was he born from above, *Gal 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. Gal 2:12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.*

We are just not told when he was born from above, when he repented or when he was converted, because it must have happened many times. Peter certainly had a bumpy ride from the time he was called, *Mat 4:18 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother,*

casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. Mat 4:19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. He did all sorts of things we might consider to have disqualified him from a relationship with Jesus, but he persevered. Our Lord prayed for him, *Luk 22:31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: Luk 22:32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.* If Peter was already converted, he needed converting again. And the many times that Peter misunderstood Jesus words or just didn't understand them, disqualify him from the kingdom don't they? No they don't.

Christianity is a race, but it is not over until we break the tape at the end of the race. To think that we have finished the race prematurely, before the end, is the mistake that we are taught by false teachers. If we have entered the narrow gate, put off the old man, been born again, then what is there left to do? But if these things are continuous objectives, part of the race, then that puts a different complexion up our Christianity. We see Peter making mistakes, sinning, but in all of this he is the Lord's and he learns from his mistakes and what a wise counsellor he is later when he writes his epistles. I do not see him once oppose the Lord's correction by saying I will not do this. He is the perfect lamb when it comes to his failings.

Peter is striving to enter the narrow gate, and he is being born with all the pain that it entails, he is repenting, and repenting of something else, and his whole life is repentance and faith to the Saviour. I think that is why the Lord says, ***"behold, the kingdom of God is within you"***. It gains its shape, substance and form, as we grow in grace. Paul says the he is like a mother in childbirth waiting for Christ to be formed in them, *Gal 4:19 My dear children! Once again, just like a mother in childbirth, I feel the same kind of pain for you until Christ's nature is formed in you.* GNB.

That nature is enabled in Gods eternal covenant with us, and it is an exciting new covenant with us New Testament Christians, it has the external forms and the internals of a new heart, enabling us to do what we are asked, *Heb 8:9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. Heb 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: Heb 10:15 Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, Heb 10:16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; Heb 10:17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*

It was prophesied by Jeremiah, and should come as no surprise, *Jer 31:33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and **write it in their hearts**; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. Jer 31:34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and **I will remember their sin no more.***

This all comes through the Person of our Lord Jesus, and by none other. He does not say, “the church will forgive your sins”, He does not say, “if you go to that congregation, that denomination, your sins will be forgiven”, He does not say, “if you want to get to heaven, follow this man’s teaching or stick with this sect”. There is no middleman with God except Christ, *1Ti 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, **the man Christ Jesus**; 1Ti 2:6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.* All those people looking for a way out of a sinful life will go everywhere except to Christ, *Joh 5:39 You study the Scriptures, because you think that in them you will find eternal life. And these very Scriptures speak about me! Joh 5:40 Yet **you are not willing to come to me in order to have life.*** GNB.

Brethren, cut out the middlemen, the denominations, the so called evangelists and go directly to Christ. He is our advocate, and no man will stand with you on judgement day, because they will have to answer for themselves. They are like the Jewish exorcists who tried to get in on the act, these intermediaries who do not know Christ will be shredded, *Act 19:13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. Act 19:14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. Act 19:15 And the evil spirit answered and said, **Jesus I know, and Paul I know**; but who are ye? Act 19:16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that **they fled out of that house naked and wounded.***

Men will tell you all manner of lies, they will send you off on a wild chase for Christ, they will have you looking everywhere to find Him, they will try all sorts of intellectual arguments to inveigle you into their systems, but the truth is always much simpler than men make it. You can go to Him directly, *Mat 24:23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. Mar 13:21 And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not: Mar 13:22 For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.*

I am sticking to Christ and you can go and stick everything else and everyone else if you cannot receive that, *Luk 17:21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo*

*there! for, behold, **the kingdom of God is within you.*** As the hymn writer William Hammond wrote in 1791,

Gracious Lord, incline Thine ear;
My request vouchsafe to hear;
Hear my never-ceasing cry;
Give me Christ, or else I die.

The “new birth” is made to be something it is not by the manipulations of evangelists. According to some it is the act whereby we are separated into God’s kingdom, and we are saved, and cannot ever fall, whatever we do, and it is something that we cling to, a hope, instead of clinging to Christ.

The new birth gives us a chance to be saved, if we are truly born again, but who is to say when one is “born from above”? We have an experience and we say that the spirit quickened me, and I have seen many come in tears to Christ only to turn their back on Him in later years. Did their expectation of born again come true?

I think the new birth is an explanation of the change from life to death that occurs when we have encountered God, but the proof of life can only be secured by the people who produce the fruits of the spirit. A new born baby must have the characteristics of his parents or else he is a bastard. We are of God when we continue to develop His characteristics. We fail, but we pick ourselves up, like Peter and we go on, we put failure behind us and press on, because we are the sons of God. In the end we shall be saved because we endured.

149. My Generation *Luke 17: 22 - 25*

Luk 17:22 And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. Luk 17:23 And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. Luk 17:24 For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. Luk 17:25 But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

This is spoken to the disciples, that is the ones who were disciples in Jesus day and has a primary warning to them. It is a rallying call to Jesus’ troops to be steady, to hold the line, to beware of being mislead and in the turmoil and tribulation that is coming, they will see the events unfolding and be comforted.

Is Jesus talking about the end of the world or is He talking about something a little nearer the disciple’s day, because that would affect our interpretation? We like to take the Scriptures as speaking to our own age and we totally neglect the

meaning that they had for those days. If the Lord was not speaking about anything relevant to the times of the disciples, then He would not have used the pronoun “you” when describing events which were coming to that age.

I think He would have said, it shall come to pass in a latter day, but not yet, like in, *Luk 21:7 And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass? Luk 21:8 And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them. Luk 21:9 But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, **be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.***

Consider those Jews of the 1st Century. They had no clue about the future, what would happen to the world they knew, whether this movement of Jesus would grow wings and fly to the ends of the whole earth. They did not know what part they would play, if any, and they certainly did not reckon on becoming household names. They did not know whether they would die in peace or become martyrs. They certainly did not know how much time the world had left and whether the kingdom would be restored to Israel or not. They could not peer over the rim of blackness into that unknown future, the future that would see us come into their faith. They just saw what was going on then at that time, and that was also very limited by the communication standards of the day.

Jesus is telling them of something that will affect them personally, something “coming,” *Luk 17:22 And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, **when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man**, and ye shall not see it.* The happy days when they rejoiced, when the bridegroom was with them, will be gone, *Mat 9:15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.*

Who we ask is the Son of Man? It is sad that we do not have the facility to read the biblical Hebrew, because we would immediately be aware of whom He is speaking, *Gen 1:26 And God said, Let us make **man** in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.* The word man = אָדָם = Adam and so Christ is the son of Adam, *1Co 15:45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.*

In the Dalman/Delitzsch’s Hebrew translation of the New Testament, Luke 17:22, it uses בֶּן־הָאָדָם = Son of Adam, to render Son of Man. In Christ’s genealogy we have, *Luk 3:38 Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was*

the son of Adam, which was the son of God. The Hebrew renders the son of Adam as, **בן-אדם** and shows the Son of Adam, the Son of Man, is the Son of God.

I concede that the term “man” can refer an ordinary man, *Psa 8:4 What is man (Enosh), that thou art mindful of him? and the **son of man** (Adam), that thou visitest him?* Man in his lowliest state and man in his noblest state. Note that two of the synonyms for man are used here, and **אָנוּשׁ** = Enosh, which is a mortal man is used with Adam as the nobler part. But in case we were in confusion over who is spoken of we have the perfect commentary in the book of Hebrews, *Heb 2:5 For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. Heb 2:6 But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Heb 2:7 Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Heb 2:8 Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. Heb 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. Heb 2:10 For **it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.***

I think that the Son of Man, which Christ calls Himself, is none other than God, and its use in Luke, speaks of His power and authority, *Luk 5:24 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to **forgive sins**, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house.....Luk 6:5 And he said unto them, That the Son of man **is Lord also of the sabbath**.....Luk 9:56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, **but to save them.** And they went to another village.....Luk 11:30 For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be **to this generation**.....Luk 12:40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man **cometh at an hour when ye think not**.....Luk 18:31 Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are **written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished**.....Luk 19:10 For the Son of man is come to seek and **to save that which was lost**.....Luk 21:27 And then shall they see the **Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.***

The Son of Man forgives sin, He is Lord of the Sabbath, He saves people who are lost, He is a sign to the people, He is a fulfilment of prophecy, and He comes in Power and great glory. And finally from Luke, He is the exposition of Scripture, *Luk 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.* You would think that

even if He came in the flesh, He would talk of these things as God would speak, but He does not. He speaks as the Son of Man. It is all about Jesus.

There are those false teachers who make our Jesus into a mere man only, and from the sewer of their learning, dare to invoke the sacred name, the Name at which every knee shall bow, and say He was a man and that at best He had some divine attributes. These maggot brained blow flies that scan the universe to know their place in it and invent lies to explain it, who have not even the slightest notion of where we came from, pontificate over the Maker and Ruler of the universe, as if what they say must be true and make it so. Fools!

We may not know very much, but we believers know this, that The Son of Adam came to seek for us and save us. And in His coming, He did not take upon Himself the form of angels, *Heb 2:16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Heb 2:17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. Heb 2:18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.*

And while mere mortals' dispute over the His person, whether He was God or not, we see something different, something more personal. It is possibly the greatest truth that comes from the words, "Son of Adam", although there may undoubtedly be many more. He called Himself the Son of Adam because He wanted to identify with us. It was of no use Him being seen as God when He came on Earth, even though He was God with us, Immanuel, because we cannot identify with a God, we don't know what it is like. But if He came as man, yes we could identify with Him, "**he took on him the seed of Abraham**".

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, to redeem us. He loved us so much that He endured the contradiction of sinners for me, and you, *Heb 12:3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.* He became a man so that He could feel mortality, feel temptation, feel the pains of the body for me and for you. All of His suffering was not for Himself, not because He had to do it, but it was for me and you, because He loved us. It was so personal, so intimate, a particular redemption of the individual soul.

And here we are, the sinful ants of the universe, attempting to dissect God, attempting to use our intellect to classify the Great Mind of the Cosmos, instead of falling in amazed silence before Him with that almost speechless gratitude, "my Lord and my God". If the disciples had the slightest inkling of this, then they most assuredly would agree, "*the days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it*". The glory days upon earth would become the days of sorrow due to His absence from them.

That does not mean that He would not be with them. He would be absent from them bodily but spiritually, they would not be alone, *Mat 28:20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, **I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*** Amen.

There was coming upon their world a great deceit, *Mat 24:23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. Mat 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*

John sees this as the works of the anti-Christ's, *2Jn 1:6 And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it. 2Jn 1:7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.*

Paul takes up this message, *2Th 2:1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 2Th 2:2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 2Th 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 2Th 2:4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*

The Epistle to the Thessalonian church was written around 50 AD, that is about 20 years before the Romans, under Titus' 10th Legion, sacked and destroyed Jerusalem. These people were living in the days prior to the destruction of the Temple and they were being warned, for what Temple could it be but the one at Jerusalem, as after its destruction **there was no Temple, so it could not be in a future time.**

Book	Author	Date	Book	Author	Date
Mark	John Mark	50 ^{AD}	Hebrews	Paul (in prison)	60 ^{AD}
1 ^{Thessalonians}	Paul	52 ^{AD}	Ephesians	Paul (in prison)	61 ^{AD}
11 ^{Thessalonians}	Paul	53 ^{AD}	Colossians	Paul (in prison)	62 ^{AD}
Galatians	Paul	55 ^{AD}	Philemon	Paul (in prison)	62 ^{AD}
Matthew	Matthew	55 ^{AD}	Phillipians	Paul (in prison)	62 ^{AD}
1 ^{Corinthians}	Paul	56 ^{AD}	1 ^{Timothy}	Paul	63 ^{AD}
11 ^{Corinthians}	Paul	58 ^{AD}	Titus	Paul	63 ^{AD}
Romans	Paul	58 ^{AD}	11 ^{Timothy}	Paul (2nd imprisonment)	63 ^{AD}
James	James	60 ^{AD}	Acts	Luke	65 ^{AD}
1-2 ^{Peter}	Peter	60 ^{AD}	John	John	90 ^{AD}
Jude	Jude	60 ^{AD}	1-2-3 ^{John}	John	90 ^{AD}
Luke	Luke	60 ^{AD}	Revelation	John	90 ^{AD}

There was going to be a falling away of the people after so glorious a Pentecost, and it would culminate in the destruction of the Jewish Temple. Within a generation of the crucifixion, 40 years, it would come to pass. You only have to look at the state of the churches as mentioned in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, only two out of seven churches seem to be functional, the others need varying degrees of correction.

I think there was a worrying concern among the disciples about the future events and we do not see that, because we are placed in the 21st century and we have our own worries, and we hardly think of these brothers in the 1st century, let alone their concerns. They were a troubled people, the Romans had progressively colonised them, their own rulers despised them, and their religion was controlled by the Sadducees and Pharisees, there were continual insurrections, and judging by the number Jesus healed, they were not particularly healthy.

They were desperately seeking some comfort, so many of the people would have looked to false messiahs, as Gamaliel had observed, *Act 5:36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. Act 5:37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.* *Barrabas was a notorious criminal, Luk 23:18 And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: Luk 23:19 (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.)*

There was a holocaust coming, it became ethnic cleansing and I think it was as brutal as the Nazi regime. According to Josephus, 1.1 million non-combatants died in Jerusalem and 100,000 in Galilee; 97,000 enslaved. An estimated

combined death toll for the First and Third Roman Jewish Wars was approximately 350,000. The tragedy of the Jewish people was just beginning.

The disciples might be swayed by the deceiving voices, *Luk 17:23 And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them.* No, says Jesus, I have told you before, don't listen to them or go after them.

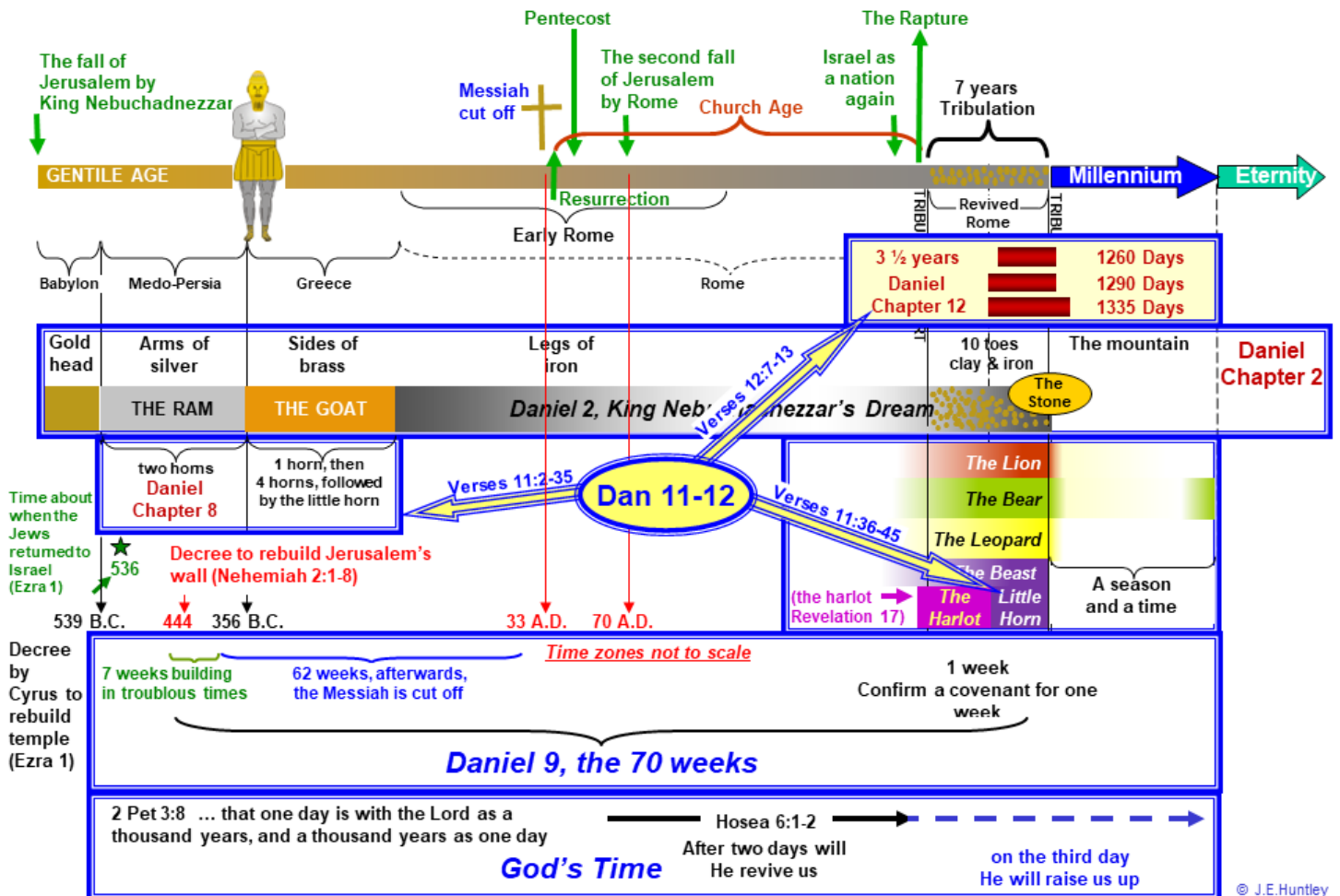
150. Sudden Death *Luke 17: 24 - 27*

Luk 17:23 And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. Luk 17:24 For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. Luk 17:25 But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. Luk 17:26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. Luk 17:27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

The way that we generally exegete passages such as this, is that we come to them with our ideas, probably picked up from novels, such as “the late great planet earth”, or some sensationalist doomsday preacher, and then we turn to the Scripture, with our preconceived ideas, and we interpret the passage in line with what we think to be true.

It gets very complicated, so much so that the end times becomes a jumble of “toing and froing”, “ascending and descending” to heaven, secret comings and public comings of Christ, temple building and restoration of the Jewish nation. By way of illustration I give you a typical timeline of the end of the world, and as you can see it gets very busy, according to them (by the way, I do not agree with this chart).

Timeline of Daniel Chapters 11 and 12



While you are recovering from that chart, and you think to yourself that you must be a bit dim for not being able to grasp the finer details, and that you are so glad that there are men who devote themselves to the Bible, just so that you can “understand” it, are you not putting yourself down? Is it really that complex that you need a degree in eschatology before you can understand the end times? Or have you been taken captive? *Col 2:7 Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Col 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. Col 2:9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*

I do not believe these people are teaching fact, and I think that it is an end time **philosophy**, and that men have departed from the simplicity in Christ, *2Co 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his*

subtily, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. The truth is that we do not know exactly how things will end, and the soothsayers are trying to sell their “snake oil” cure for the troubled souls, who want to know the “truth” at any price, but Jesus said, *Mat 24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.....* *Act 1:6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? Act 1:7 And he said unto them, **It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.***

We don't know how it all ends, but it will for certain end, and we have a few snippets of things that will happen, but we are not too sure of the order in which they happen. If the disciples were not told by Jesus, and He could have explained to them exactly, and in what order they occurred, why do we expect to know? If it were that obvious, there would be just one teaching and not this plethora of teachings disagreeing with each other. If God is the God of order, then this confusion is not of Him. It is not a straight forward teaching, like salvation, and it seems very complicated.

I have written a book on “Jesus and prophecy” and it shows that you can write a lot about this subject and perhaps show off your knowledge among the luminaries who have written about the subject. But what is it really worth and does it help you on your journey with Christ? I do not really think so. It becomes philosophy for the sake of knowledge, and I have been guilty of this error, but as Jesus said, *Luk 17:23 And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them.* We don't know for certain the exact details of the end times and we should not speak of what we are ignorant of.

All of us are saying to you, look here for Christ, He is coming like this, according to “my” system of belief. Look He is there, come with me and we will find Him and no one else will, but Jesus says, “*go not after them, nor follow them*”. They will all be calling after you, hucksters selling their wares. I read this only this morning from the Chronological Bible,

EARLY JEWISH MISSIONARIES (ACTS 19:13, 14)

Missionary work among the Jews in the Greco-Roman world took place in the everyday lives of the people. Jewish "missionaries" were active in the marketplace, competing for devotion to their God amidst various other persons who were advocating devotion to their own god. Such competition often occurred in displays of power over spiritual forces. The missionary whose god proved his or her power by signs of superiority over other gods could make a strong case for a person to change religious devotion.

These "missionaries." both Jewish and non-Jewish, therefore, were often wanderers, migrants who traveled from city to city to show the power of their deity. Their missionary work was also their livelihood. In response to their activity, the missionaries hoped to receive adequate compensation to keep their operations afloat. A century later, the Christian critic Celsus described such Jewish and non-Jewish missionary activity in a not-so-complimentary way: "There are many who, although of no name, are moved without scruples and on the slightest occasion, whether within or without the cultic places, gesturing like inspired persons, they beg and roam in cities and camps" (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 7.8-10).

Competitive missionary activity is the setting behind the "itinerant Jewish exorcists" and the "seven sons of Sceva" (Acts 19:13, 19). Impressed by the works of Paul, these missionaries sought to prove their God's superiority over other gods in order to convert people to the synagogue, and they even appealed to "the name of the Lord Jesus" (19:13). Yet the evil spirit knew the difference between the Jewish missionaries and the Christian Paul, turning on the missionaries (19:15, 16).

This public display strengthened the credibility of the Christian missionaries in Ephesus. The name of Jesus was "magnified," leading many to convert from pagan magical arts (19:17-19). The Jewish missionaries had inadvertently turned into missionaries for Christ and His church!

Sound familiar? There always have been misleading men and false Christ's, anti-Christ's, *1Jn 2:18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are **there many antichrists**; whereby we know that it is the last time. 1Jn 2:19 **They went out from us, but they were not of us**; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.* They come from the very source which we think is sacred, from the "church" but do not be fooled by them.

Jesus said, *Mat 18:3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Mat 18:4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.* He did not say you had to have a great intellect, only that you become as little children.

Jesus warns us of these fools who would mislead, and it is not just the doctrine of the second coming that they mislead in, but in all things they lead away from Christ. You can tell quite easily if you are one of the people likely to be lead

astray, if you are honest. Ask yourself if you are following Jesus, and following only Jesus, then take a look at your Church, your Bible teaching and non-Bible teaching, your companions as well, and hold them up to the light of God's word. Do they correspond or are there differences, a non-correspondence between the teaching and practice of Christ and what you do and believe? If there is a mismatch and you are comfortable with it, then you are going down the path of delusion.

It is so easy to follow men, to succumb to group pressure, peer pressure, to fall in with a church practice that you have no understanding of, to submit to men's vanity, never the less, you go along with it. If you look at Christianity today it bears no likeness to the Christianity of the Apostles. There is little difference between the world and the religion of people today. Christianity has changed dramatically because we have changed Christ and substituted the devil for Him.

It is quite straight forward, walk freely with Him, "Follow Him" or take up your crutches and follow a Church or a man, and you cannot do both. If you cannot stand with Christ alone, and if you must lean on that broken edifice of man's making, you are not a truly faithful person and you are not following Him, only a warped version of Him. Thank God we can purge ourselves of this poisoned water and drink the pure stream that comes from Christ. If we really believe the words "follow me" why can't we stand on our own with Him, why do we have to seek approval from man? When Christ said follow ME, it was exclusive of every other person or object.

Back to the disciples of Jesus day, what did they understand? They had not got 2,000 years of teaching, confusion, wrong, heretical, and much of it factional and sectarian. The next 2,000 years would be trying to sort out who Jesus was and what He taught, because men tried to complicate the things of God. Instead of using the Scripture we used human intellect, instead of sticking to what was said, we went beyond the Word to speculation. We pry into things that do not belong to us, *Deu 29:29 "There are some things that the LORD our God has kept secret; but he has revealed his Law, and we and our descendants are to obey it forever.* We ended up divided. Jesus had given the World a stable platform of teaching but we just screwed it up.

The disciples did not know what the future held but they had an idea from the persecutions, uprisings and seditions. They may have sensed the holocaust that was coming, and they needed comfort about the future which was far from bright. The hymn by the Quaker Whittier could not have been farther from the truth when he wrote,

O Sabbath rest by Galilee,
O calm of hills above,
where Jesus knelt to share with thee

the silence of eternity,
interpreted by love!

It was in uncertain times, troubled times, noisy times that God had chosen to be incarnated in and crucified. Now on the verge of His death, with His enemies closing in, there are words for the disciples that will steady them but keep them on their toes, *Luk 17:24 For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. Luk 17:25 But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.*

When He comes it will be as a brilliant flash of lightning, seen by everyone, from one part of the sky to the other, from one part of heaven to the other. There will be no confusion over it, no need to say He is there or there, it shall be obvious when He comes and that is all that they need to know. It doesn't matter whether you are a millennialist, post- or pre-, dispensationalist, amillennial, or any other flavour of prophetic interpretation. When you are being put to death by the Roman thugs, and the spear is going into your side, you do not think about the niceties of the doctrines of the second coming, you are looking for Jesus and none other.

Jesus must suffer too and be rejected by a majority of His contemporaries. The disciples must also suffer. It is like history is repeating itself, and a great cataclysm is coming on the earth, as violent and as wide spread as that in Noah's day. Jesus was there and saw what happened to that generation and so He is a fit person to talk about it.

All the people in Noah's day were going about their business, oblivious of the sign of the times. They were eating and drinking and having marriage feasts when a bomb, as it were, exploded on their world and in an instant of shocked realisation, the whole place came tumbling down, and all that they had thought would last forever was destroyed, *Luk 17:26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. Luk 17:27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.*

As the events transpiring were, "past tense", for the people that Luke wrote to, it is necessary that we keep a firm perspective on the events and see that we are viewing them from the correct point in history and interpret them as such.

Perhaps this was all the disciples would need to know for the present, and it would get them thinking on these things. When they had thought about it they would come to this again, in the Temple at Jerusalem, and they would be told more.

151. Destruction *Luke 17: 28 - 30*

Luk 17:28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; Luk 17:29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Luk 17:30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

Two examples are given of the sudden destruction coming, Noah's day and Lot's day, Noah's in the old world, the pre-diluvian world, the world before the flood and the other one in the post-diluvian world, the world after the flood. Life continues much as it has done until the sudden destruction comes upon the people. This will do for now, as Jesus tells His disciples and readies them for the events to come.

If you think about it, we are in the time of the disciples in Luke, and the crucifixion and resurrection have not happened yet, and we have to be careful in trying to place events that occurred in that Old Testament, into a New Testament context that would be not be understood by the disciples. What was the expectation of the disciples and what eschatology, doctrine of the last things, did they hold on, and if they held anything then what Scriptures did those Jewish disciples use to back up their ideas?

We have a clue where we should look from later on in Luke, after the resurrection, on the Emmaus road, *Luk 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures **the things concerning himself***. The focus is clearly on Jesus. Jesus is the subject of the Old Testament and He is the focus of prophecy, *Rev 19:10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for **the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy***.

Jesus is the subject of typology, the forms and shadows under which He showed Himself in the Old Testament, such as the sacrifices, and the instruments of worship (the Tabernacle, and Temple), *Rev 21:22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it*. According to one Christian website, there are 351 Old Testament Prophecies fulfilled In Jesus Christ, and they show the fulfilment of them in the New Testament. You sometimes catch a glimpse of Jesus in a person, like Joseph or Moses. There are many ways to "see" Jesus in the Old Testament.

Isn't it sad that modern prophetic interpretation has taken its eye off of Jesus, and introduced a teaching that focuses on the earthly nation of Israel, the events

surrounding man before Christ comes and the rebuilding of an earthly Temple? It has turned from being a Christocentric Gospel, Christ centred, to an Anthropocentric Gospel, a man centred Gospel. Each age interprets the signs of the times according to the current technology. I remember, years ago, seeing a book on prophecy and the end times, set in the era of 1914. There was a portrayal of Armageddon, with bi-planes and 1st war tanks in some imaginary battle for Christ's Kingdom, and all sorts of monsters from Revelation playing their part. It was pure theatre and little theology. It was also very little of Christ.

If you look for Bible events that were known to the Jews, they start right in Genesis, *Gen 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* You see from Paul's letter to the Galatians the fulfilment of this in the person of Christ, *Gal 4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, Gal 4:5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

It is a battle between good and evil, Christ and His army and the devil and his army, culminating in the triumph of Christ. The chosen nation, Israel, was a dismal failure with only a small remnant saved, and the whole system a pale shadow of its former self, and its worship in tatters, which is why I will concentrate on the Temple as the object most misunderstood, and yet most contended over in the interpretation of end time prophecy.

The Temple enters into our view at the time of Noah's Flood, the judgement upon the old world and deliverance of a remnant of mankind into the new world. The Ark is the "saviour" of people, with the ability of sheltering man from destruction, and to go from one world to another world, and that is an obvious type of Christ. The Ark has dimensions and rooms that are patterned upon the Tabernacle and the Temple of Solomon (for a fuller exposition go to our book, "Christ the Creator" p124).



The measurements between the Ark of Noah, the Tabernacle, the Temple of Solomon, the Temple of Ezekiel and the Temple in Revelation, all show some commonalities. The three floors of the ark I take to be of the same height, 10 cubits, the same height as the Tabernacle of Moses. The Holy of Holies is 10 x 10 cubits and the Holy place 10 x 20 cubits, so 30 cubits altogether for the Tabernacle.

At the beginning of this new world, in Noah's day, there was the Ark, a type of the Tabernacle. Now tell me, was it just a "boat" or did it signify much more? Was it just a wooden object with no meaning or did it signify much more, was it a type of the person of Christ? Of course it was Christ, from the start of this new world, Christ had carried them through the judgement of the flood, Christ had saved the remnant, and they were in Christ.

Later the Tabernacle was made according to the pattern given to Moses, *Exo 25:8 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. Exo 25:9 According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.* It is called the Tabernacle = **מִשְׁכָּן** = mishkân or tent, and it was where God would meet with Moses, *Exo 25:21 And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. Exo 25:22 And **there I will meet with thee**, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.*

The people offered service at the Tabernacle because God had made it a meeting place, and you will note that, *Joh 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and did **tabernacle among us**, and we beheld his glory, glory as of an only begotten of a father, full of grace and truth.* The Tabernacle in the Old Testament was a type of Christ and it was the place that the people went to meet with Jesus, although He was veiled in part from the people. The Tabernacle was Jesus.

The Temple became the permanent dwelling place of God when the people gained entry and peace in the land of Canaan. At the dedication of the Temple, Solomon utters the words, *1Ki 8:28 Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer, which thy servant prayeth before thee to day: 1Ki 8:29 **That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there: that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this place.** 1Ki 8:30 And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall **pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven** thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, forgive.*

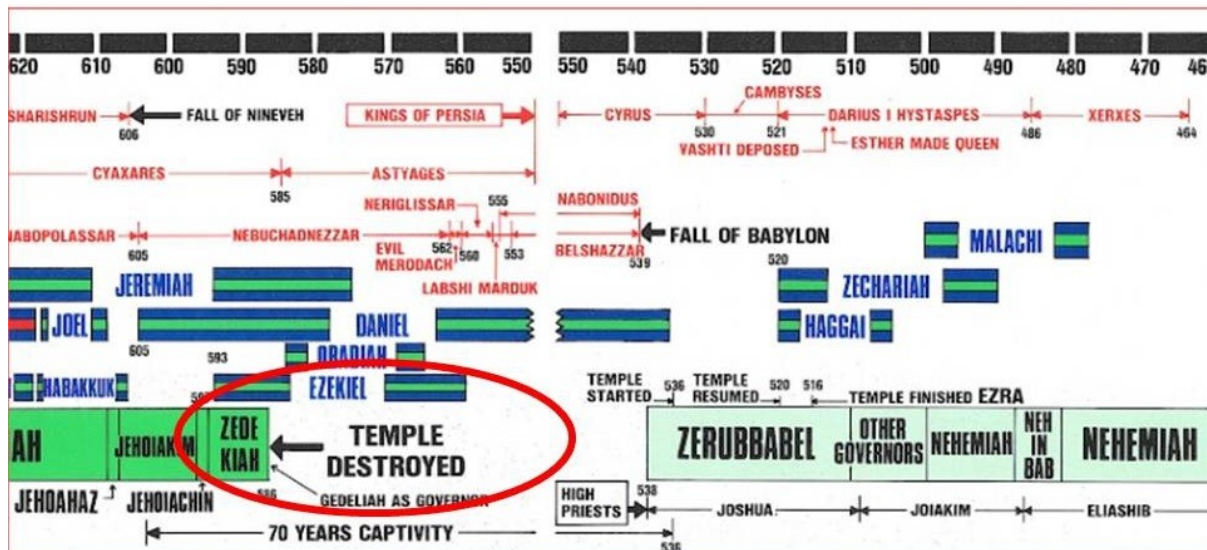
Jerusalem was important, but the Temple was most import, here was God's virtual communication hub on earth, it was where you sent your prayers, no matter where in the world you were. From the Temple in Jerusalem, the message was relayed to heaven, "*when they shall **pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven** thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, forgive*". We pray towards the same Jesus that they prayed to, *Luk 11:2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy*

kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Prayers are “in Jesus name”, *Joh 14:13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. Joh 14:14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*

Now are you going to tell me that a Temple made of stone is anything? No, it is not but a temple made to be like Jesus, a temple eternal and overshadowing the earthly is something, *Joh 2:18 Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Joh 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, **Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*** Jesus was more beautiful, more magnificent than any earthly Temple, He was the Temple.

And then we come to the destruction in Jerusalem and the Temple made of stone, like the stony heart of the Jews, an edifice without life, it having served a purpose departs from us. That leaves us with a new and living way, *Heb 10:19 **Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,** Heb 10:20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; Heb 10:21 And having an high priest over the house of God;*

But wait, the Temple of Solomon was not the last Temple, there was Nehemiah's Temple later to become Herod's Temple before Christ came, what are we to



make of that and Ezekiel's Temple? Incidentally, the New Temple or post Solomonic Temple coincides with the Fall of Babylon. Solomon's Temple was destroyed at the same time that Ezekiel gave his prophecy of the "Temple", which is described in Ezekiel Chapters 40 to 48. Why does he give his prophecy exactly at the fall of Jerusalem? It is because it gives hope in a hopeless situation, and it gives a forward vision to the downtrodden. You will note that there is no word of Scripture that Ezekiel's Temple is to be built, in the near

future, the far future or at the end times, or any time. It already exists, and there are no building plans because it is already complete.

It was complete from eternity past, from Noah's time, from Moses time, from Solomon's time. Where do you think that that they got the plan for the Tabernacle on earth, if it was not from heaven? *Heb 8:5 But the tent where they serve is just a copy and a shadow of the real one in heaven. Before Moses made the tent, he was told, "Be sure to make it exactly like the pattern you were shown on the mountain!" Heb 8:6 Now Christ has been appointed to serve as a priest in a much better way, and he has given us much assurance of a better agreement.* The Temple in Heaven had always existed, it was Christ.

Those interrim Temples, Nehemiah's and Herod the Great's Temple, were man's attempt to recreate God's Temple, and they were a poor examples which Jesus leaves behind Him, when they in turned are ruined. The name given to Ezekiel's Temple is shown at the end of his prophecy, *Eze 48:35 It was round about eighteen thousand measures: and the name of the city from that day shall be, **The LORD is there.** יהוה שמה* Jehovah Shamah.

There is no need to build Ezekiel's Temple since it was Christ and it was already made, *Rev 21:22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.* The learned fools who think that the Temple will be built by hand when Christ comes, do not believe the words of Christ, *Joh 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Joh 2:20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? Joh 2:21 But **he spake of the temple of his body.*** If Jesus raised Himself from the dead what need is there to build an inferior Temple in stone, to go backwards?

What we have discussed is part of the Eschatology of the disciples, and whether they understood it, to the extent we think, is not clear, but Stephen appears to know his Old Testament. So far there is none of the humanistic views that we have in modern interpretations. There are signs of what is coming and that focuses on judgement. The first one, Noah's is judgement by water. The second one, Lots, is judgement by fire, *2Pe 3:6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: 2Pe 3:7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*

How much information do you want? That's enough to get anyone moving.

152. Where? *Luke 17: 31 - 37*

Luk 17:31 In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Luk 17:32 Remember Lot's wife. Luk 17:33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. Luk 17:34 I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Luk 17:35 Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Luk 17:36 Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Luk 17:37 And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

We continue to explore the eschatology of the Jewish people at the time of Christ. We notice that the expectation that they had was completely different from the modern expectation and it was much simpler.

The modern interpreters do something that the Disciples and Pharisees do not do. They do not take the bits of scripture that they cannot see a fulfilment of, and because they cannot see a literal fulfilment of them (it doesn't mean they aren't fulfilled, but they cannot see it), they then say, "because it is not fulfilled it must happen in the future", and then place all "their" unfulfilled prophecy in the future. But there is no heap of prophecies that are relegated to the future. The Old Testament has the expectation of a Messiah and that is about it.

To sum up the belief of the Jews, it was,

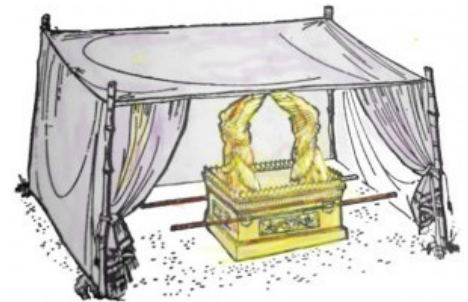
- God redeems the Jewish people from the captivity that began during the Babylonian Exile, in a new Exodus
- God returns the Jewish people to the "Land of Israel"
- God restores the House of David and the Tabernacle of David
- God creates a regent from the House of David (i.e. the Jewish Messiah) to lead the Jewish people and the world and usher in an age of justice and peace
- All nations recognize that the God of Israel is the only true God
- God resurrects the dead
- God creates a new heaven and a new earth
- The end

The woman at the well of Sychar had an expectation, *Joh 4:25 The woman saith unto him, **I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.*** *Joh 4:26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.* And she was a Samaritan and she was right in her expectation and the Lord confirmed it. The disciples also actively looked for the Messiah, *Joh 1:41 He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, **We have found the Messiah,** which is, being interpreted, the Christ.*

Like all Biblical knowledge, things seem to get more complicated as time goes on, instead of simpler. It claims to know what will happen in the future, but the facts that these systems of belief are mere speculation, philosophy. We find that science, biology, cosmology and even Christianity, have become philosophy, not fact in the search for truth.

The disciples didn't even mention the Temple and what was going to happen to it, and Stephen's speech in Acts chapter 7, did not have the same expectation as do the soothsayers of today, *Act 7:46 who found favor before God and asked to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob; Act 7:47 but Solomon built Him a house. Act 7:48 **But the Most High does not dwell in temples made by hand**, as the prophet says, Act 7:49 "Heaven is My throne, and the earth a footstool of My feet; what house will you build Me," "says the Lord," "or what the place of My rest?" Act 7:50 "Did not My hands make all these things?" Isa. 66:1, 2 Act 7:51 Oh stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and in the ears! You always fell against the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, you also did. LITV. God doesn't dwell in Temples made with hands, what bit of made "with hands" do you not understand? What price a future temple built with hands?*

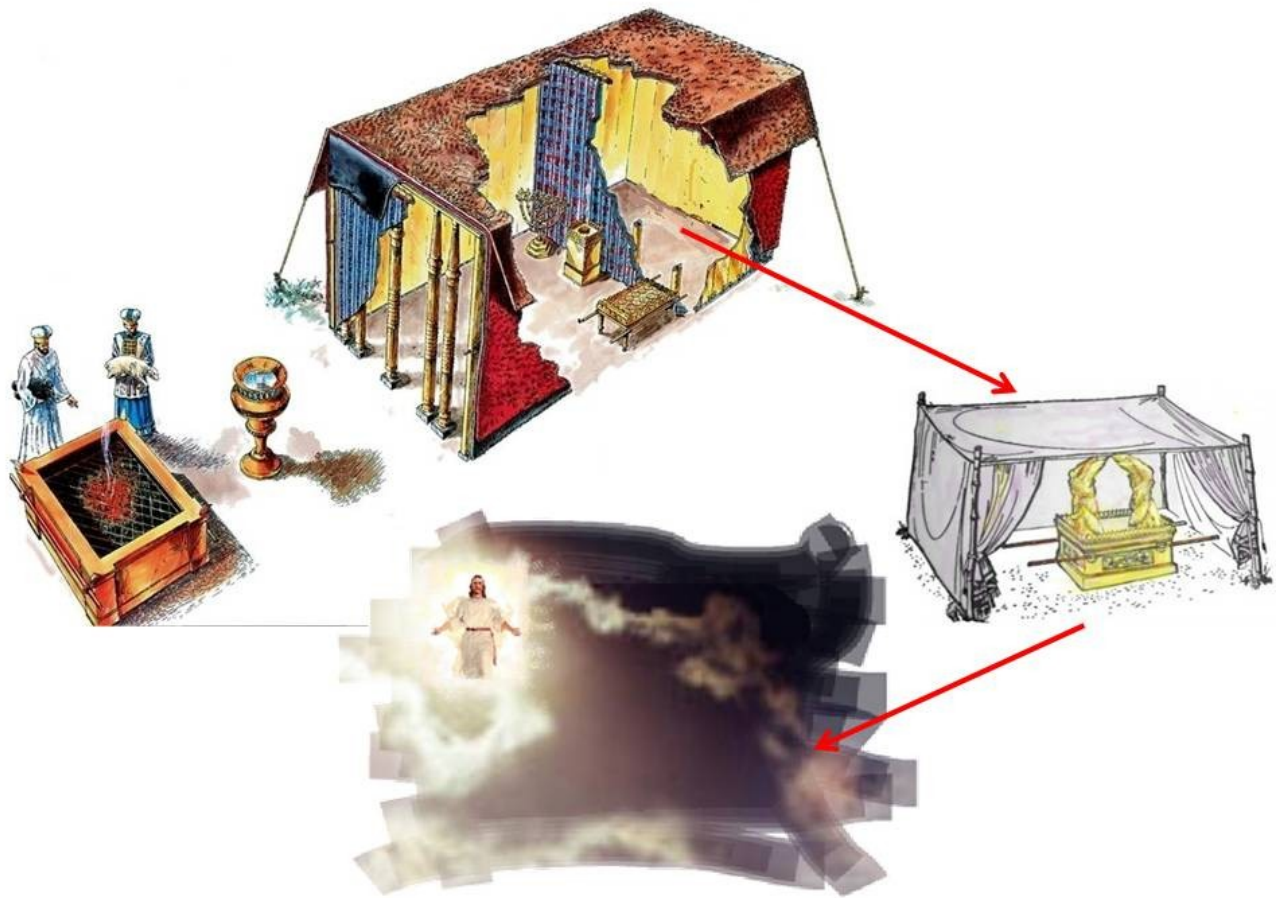
Peter notes one building that did go up, the **Tabernacle of David**, that is the Tent of David, being rebuilt. *Act 15:15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, Act 15:16 After this I will return, and **will build again the tabernacle of David**, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: Act 15:17 **That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called**, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.* It was the habitation of all men and ALL of the Gentiles, you and me. Well, have you come to it, because it says you should have, unless you are not of the "residue" of man, not of the remnant?



You will see the Tabernacle of David is Jesus, because the tent contained the Ark of the Covenant, which is a type of Jesus, *Rom 3:24 being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in **Christ Jesus; Rom 3:25 whom God has set forth a mercy-seat**, through faith in his blood, for the shewing forth of his righteousness, in respect of the passing by the sins that had taken place before, through the forbearance of God; Darby.*

The Tabernacle of David was a tent the David made to house the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy seat, when it was taken from the main Tabernacle of the Lord, which remained at Gibeon, *1Ch 16:37 **So he left there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD Asaph and his brethren, to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required: 1Ch 16:38 And***

*Obededom with their brethren, threescore and eight; Obededom also the son of Jeduthun and Hosah to be porters: 1Ch 16:39 **And Zadok the priest, and his brethren the priests, before the tabernacle of the LORD in the high place that was at Gibeon,** 1Ch 16:40 To offer burnt offerings unto the LORD upon the altar of the burnt offering continually morning and evening, and to do according to all that is written in the law of the LORD, which he commanded Israel; Gibeon was the only city in Canaan that made peace with Israel, and they were Hivites, Jos 11:19 There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon: all other they took in battle.*



David took the Ark from the tabernacle and housed it separately in a tent or Tabernacle in Jerusalem, hence the Tabernacle of David. This was the only thing that was carried into the New Testament, and it is clearly spiritual.

Jesus describes the events accompanying the “days of the Son of Adam”, the days like those experienced by Noah and Lot, *Luk 17:31 In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Luk 17:32 Remember Lot's wife. Luk 17:33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. Luk 17:34 I tell you, in*

that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Luk 17:35 Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Luk 17:36 Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Now Paul teaches that, *1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 1Th 4:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 1Th 4:18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.* But the disciples are not aware of this yet and they have not seen the coming of Christ as a sudden event, but as a process.

There was nothing in Paul's statement about "getting your things together", not "looking back" at what you were leaving, people being taken selectively from "their bed" or from their place of work grinding out the corn. The Lord just comes for you. So we are left to puzzle out the seeming difference in what Paul teaches to that of Jesus' teaching. I like Paul Kretzmann's comment on this,

The thought which stands out from the Lord's warning is this that it will be too late to prepare for the Lord's coming when His hour has come, when the Judgment bursts upon the world. The suddenness of the breaking of Judgment Day will take every person where he just happens to be at that time. A man will be up on the flat roof of the house. He will neither have, nor should he attempt to take, time to go down and get any instruments or possessions. A man will be out in the field. He also should not turn back behind him for anything of this world's goods that he may have valued.

As when an army of the enemy makes a sudden successful assault and only precipitate flight will save the inhabitants, he that turns back for money, clothes, or other goods is lost, so the person whose mind is still attached to the things of this world on the last day is beyond hope of salvation. The example of Lot's wife should be before the minds of the believers at all times. Had she not turned behind her to satisfy her curiosity, she might have saved her soul with the rest. Her hesitation proved her destruction. See Mat 16:25; Mar 8:35; Luk 9:24.

He that in the last emergency will have nothing in mind but the saving of this earthly life and the goods that are necessary for its preservation, will lose forever the true life in and with God; but he whose desires are free from all love for this world and what it has to offer, that has denied himself and all that this life might have given him, he will save his life, the life in God, his soul and its eternal salvation.

Christ repeats this warning once more, with great emphasis. In that same night two men will be occupying the same bed, of whom one will be accepted and the other rejected. Two women will be grinding flour at the same mill; one will be accepted, the other will be rejected. Two men will be in the field; the one will be accepted, the other will be rejected. And the emphasis of the Lord was not without its effect upon the disciples. In awe and fear, they barely breathe the question: Where, Lord? Where will all this happen? And He told them: Where the dead body is, there will the eagles gather themselves together.

The world, especially in the last days, will be, and today is, like a decaying carcass, whose stench rises up into the heavens. And judgment and destruction will come upon the entire spiritually dead and morally rotten human race. It is a strong, but fitting figure, revealing the world as it is, in its true condition, without a redeeming feature to recommend it in the sight of God.

Luk 17:37 And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

The only response to this statement of Jesus is “Where, Lord?” where does this occur, in what place, not “When Lord”. They are in the midst of something they see as imminent, and they look around them and ask “Where?” Is it in Galilee, is it in Jerusalem, is it in Samaria, where is this terrible thing going to happen? This tells me that we are dealing with real people here and that they want to know the place it will happen, where, because they know it is coming.

They are so unlike us modern “curitans”, people who are curios Christians who want to know about when it will happen and the sequence of events, and the times and the seasons, not **where it will happen**.

Whether upon earth or in heaven, **where**, and that shows how little we care about His coming because we think that if there is a time, we can set an alarm clock to wake ourselves to duty. “Where” has a little more uncertainty about it, but “**where**” can be avoided, “**when**” cannot.

Jesus has told them enough for now. We are not sure at this stage whether Jesus inferred the destruction of Jerusalem or not. Hindsight, the rear view mirror, is a wonderful thing, but the disciples do not know Paul the Pharisee yet, and his teachings are not yet “Christened”. They do not know that Jerusalem will be destroyed, a holocaust with a million dead. They do not know if fleeing judgement is fleeing the destruction of Jerusalem or the Final end. But they have been given something to process, something to think about.

And what of that final enigmatic statement of the Lord, “*Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together*”. Is Jesus referring to the Roman Eagles or just the carrion birds who will feed on corpses? There is more information coming at Jerusalem in Luke chapter 21.